



TRISTAR
PICTURES

A SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY

25'
LM

THE NUMBER FOUR

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We hold these truths to be self-evident,
that all men are created equal, that they
are endowed by their Creator with certain
unalienable Rights, that among these are
Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

Thomas Jefferson

TITLE SEQUENCE -- OUT OF FOCUS LIGHTS OF ALL COLORS

dance, pulse, spin and resolve into the bold letters of a destination sign on an MTA bus, **THE NUMBER FOUR**.

SWISH PAN -- BUS DOORS OPEN ON SOUTH CENTRAL -- A WAR ZONE that used to be part of America, markets, businesses, people's homes now defiled with graffiti, the burn-scarred remnants of **THE UPRISING** called the L.A. riots. SWISH PAN.

The doors open on FAIRFAX AND ADAMS, as Commuters wait for the ride they use everyday. SWISH PAN. The doors open on L.A. COUNTY MUSEUM, as Dinosaurs struggle in the tar. SWISH PAN. The doors open on THE HARD ROCK CAFE, with tourists in funny hats and loud shirts. SWISH PAN. The doors open on THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN, towering over the hillside houses. SWISH PAN. The doors open on SUNSET BOULEVARD, as Metal Heads with big hair point at cars with eight syllables for names. SWISH PAN. The doors open on RODEO DRIVE, as Rich People window shop at stores like GUCCI, ARMANI, VAN CLEEF & ARPELS while a Homeless Woman nearby holds a sign that reads, **PREGNANT, WILL WORK FOR FOOD**. SWISH PAN.

EXT THE 20/20 CLUB -- NIGHT -- THREE PEOPLE

stand in shadow, pull back when someone shouts,

VOICE (O.S.)

You riding or not?

For the first time we see the driver of this bus, PEPPER MARTIN is forty-five, tough, blue collar from head to toe, all his life a bus driver, and right now his patience is worn thin by the end of his shift.

PEPPER

You're welcome, just thought I'd ask!

The three people ignore Pepper, sinister, as the door closes with a HISS! a CLUNK!, the bus moves on.

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- NIGHT -- EUGENE AND BARON

thirteen, black kids in full South Central regalia, skateboard like it's an Olympic event, hop fences, land back on the boards, flip the boards mid-jump, slide along curbs, spin 360s, they could do this in their sleep as they follow the double yellow line headed straight for,

The Number Four, its HEADLIGHTS shine like two wide open eyes, its ENGINE growls like a big bear, and right now on a collision course with Baron and Eugene, until its tires screech, it shudders to a stop and,

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- PEPPER

honks the horn, leans out the window, sees what's coming.

PEPPER

Hey, hey, hey! Don't touch my bus!
Goddamnit!

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- NIGHT -- EUGENE AND BARON

peel off on either side of the bus, out come spray cans and
SKATE POSSE! gets applied to the dull, metal surface.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- PEPPER

watches in the rear-view-mirror as the tagging proceeds,
sighs big, shifts, drives on.

PEPPER

(to self)

So, when I get out of the bus, they're
gone in seconds flat, and the paint's
already dry, but if a goddamn transit
cop was around, he'd be able to--

ART (O.S.)

--Pepper, you know what they say about
people who talk to themselves?

PEPPER

No, Art, what do they say?

ART MONROE, fifty, but looking much older, in a wrinkled
and dirty overcoat, swigs from a bottle of NIGHT TRAIN.

ART

They're always guaranteed somebody will
be listenin'.

PEPPER

Art, how many times do I have to say it,
I don't want people drinking on my bus.

ART

Sorry, I know, I know...

Art shoves the bottle into his overcoat, pulls out a
folded, worn PORTRAIT HEAD SHOT OF A MARINE SOLDIER, Art
mood shifts quickly from elation to depression.

Pepper watches in the rear-view-mirror, a ritual that
apparently has gone on many times before.

ART

Five years, Pepper, FIVE! And then outta the blue he calls and says he's gonna be here on the 4th of July, maybe he wants to sort things out?

Art's eyes fill with tears, Pepper tries to bring him back.

PEPPER

You and me, Art, we know being a father is a hard thing, right? You love them into life, protect them so they can grow up, and they're in such a hurry to live their own lives, they forget who we are.

Art is lost in grief, shoves the photo into his coat, takes another sip of Night Train, trembles, as several rows back,

ANNA, a cherubic Hispanic who is very pregnant, shifts in her seat as,

HISS! CLUNK! At the front door VAUGHN and SOLO, two black teenagers, quickstep onto the bus with a ghetto blaster playing rap music too loud, Pepper blocks their path with,

PEPPER

Read it and reach for the volume knob.

A SIGN over the windshield says, **THE PLAYING OF RADIOS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.**

SOLO

Hey, I just walked up the steps, man, gimme a sec, we're with the program.

VAUGHN

Strictly prohibited, sounds like my man, Doctor Dre, kickin' out a new jam.

Icy stares from Vaughn and Solo accompany a reduction in volume, they pay their fare as Pepper steers into traffic

ART

It was the booze, Pepper, and the divorce, he hated me for it, the service made a man out of him, God knows I never could, did I tell you I ain't seen him in five years? I don't know if he'll recognize me, I mean me him.

Art frowns, turns, faces Vaughn and Solo who sit several seats back, nod to the soft rap music.

ART

Hey, could you guys lower it just a little bit more?

Solo hops into the seat next to Art, who jumps, startled, as Vaughn slides into the seat behind.

SOLO

Hey, I already cut the radio down, why you messin' with me?

ART

Because we're havin' an important conversation here, and I can't think with that music so loud.

Vaughn and Solo exchange glances, Vaughn TURNS UP the rap.

Anna shifts in her seat, holds her ears, speaks in Spanish.

ANNA (SUBTITLES)

Oh, please, my doctor said no excitement, it makes my baby kick.

At the front of the bus, Pepper glances over his shoulder and down shifts with,

PEPPER

Guys, turn it down, go back a few seats and wait until your stop, nobody on this bus wants to hear that stuff.

SOLO

We can't sit here? Yo, the days of brothers ridin' at the back of the bus is over.

VAUGHN

I bet if it was country and western or classical you'd ask us to turn it up.

Vaughn nudges Solo who turns the ghetto blaster up louder,

Anna shifts in her seat, pinches her face, rubs her belly.

ANNA (SUBTITLES)

Oh, my God, my baby is kicking hard. It hurts.

Pepper peers in the rear-view-mirror, sees Anna's reaction.

PEPPER

Guys, you don't turn it down right now, and you're off the bus.

ART

Yeah, we're trying to talk here.

VAUGHN

What makes your shit more important than my shit? Fuck you, man. IT'S A FREE COUNTRY!

Close on the volume knob as Vaughn twists it UP FULL.

Pepper shakes his head, makes a decision, downshifts, pulls the bus over with a HISS! a CLUNK! and the doors swing open as he turns in his chair, when suddenly Art staggers to his feet and salutes at attention.

ART

IT'S A FREE COUNTRY!

(sings)

Oh, say can you see, By the dawn's early light, What so proudly we hailed, At the twilights last gleaming...

VAUGHN

Fuck! Ain't no liberty bell ringin' land of the brave bullshit in my life!

SOLO

Speak on it, ain't no revolution freed up my ass anytime lately!

Pepper watches it all with a mixture of fatigue and anger as, Art's singing, the rap music, Vaughn and Solo talking loud, Anna squirming and unable to control her body.

ANNA (SUBTITLES)

Oh, my God, he's kicking so hard, it feels like he's coming.

ART

While the rockets red glare, And bombs burst in mid air--

PEPPER

--Art, please, sit down!

(to Vaughn, Solo)

On this bus I'm king, and you're off, right now!

Solo steps into the aisle, raises his sweatshirt, reveals a .22 PISTOL.

VAUGHN

What you gettin' in my face like that for?

SOLO

Yo, what's up with that, chill, man.

VAUGHN

No way, I just want to know why the man
is dissin' me like that.

(to Pepper)

Hey, stand the fuck up! Maybe I'll
drive for awhile.

Pepper stares, something hard rises up in his eyes.

PEPPER

Nobody drives this bus but me.

ANNA (SUBTITLES)

Oh, oh, I think he is coming quick!

Pepper spins in his chair, smashes the accelerator to the
floor and,

Solo is somersaulted backward, falls against a seat, drops
the .22, which flies through the air, lands right at Art's
feet, but he is oblivious, sings at the top of his lungs.

ART

Gave proof through the night, That our
flag was still there...

Anna falls back in the seat from the acceleration of the
bus, breathes hard, panic contorts her face.

ANNA (SUBTITLES)

Oh, my God, I need to get to a hospital!

VAUGHN

The son of a bitch is nuts, Solo!

Vaughn holds on for dear life as Pepper spins the big
steering wheel and,

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- NIGHT -- THE NUMBER FOUR

weaves through traffic with precision, its engine screams.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- VAUGHN AND SOLO

huddle at the center of the bus as Art clutches the hand
rail, sways at attention.

ART

Oh say does that star spangled banner
yet wave...

SOLO

He's loc'd out. Gonna crash this broken
down muthafucka'!

VAUGHN

Hope this thing's got airbags! STOP THE
BUS, MAN! WE WANT OFF!

Suddenly, Pepper slams on the brakes, brings the bus to a
noisy halt and with a HISS! a CLUNK! Vaughn and Solo scurry
out the backdoor.

ART

...o'er the land of the free, And the
home of the bra-a-a-a-ave!

Art salutes, sits, acts like nothing ever happened, but
Pepper is truly shaken, he sees the .22 pistol, picks it
up, unsure what to do, then shoves the gun into an OLD
LEATHER BAG slung over his seat and nods at Anna with,

PEPPER

You okay, senora? That's better, right?
No more music.

Anna staggers to her feet and screams,

ANNA (SUBTITLES)

MY BABY IS COMING OUT!

Pepper gets it for the first time, this woman, holding her
distended belly, trying to stand, is giving birth.

PEPPER

Jesus Christ....! Nino?

ANNA

SI!

PEPPER

(grabs the radio)

This is Pepper Martin on 8324-9, I'm at
Santa Monica and La Cienega, I've got a
woman in labor, and I need an ambulance
right now!

Silence. The radio blinks, hisses, the lights wink out.
and Pepper tosses the microphone away with,

PEPPER

Piece of shit, good for nothing MTA!
Everybody hold tight!

Pepper shifts gears, stomps on the accelerator pedal and

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- NIGHT -- THE NUMBER FOUR

lurches forward, takes a corner too fast, rips THE SIGN FOR A HAIR SALON off its hinges, sparks fly from busted neon.

EXT HOSPITAL -- NIGHT -- EMERGENCY ENTRANCE -- NUMBER FOUR

blares its horn, skids to a halt, the door hisses open, and Pepper leaps off, looks for someone who can help when,

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, that's not a bus stop!

It's a PARKING OFFICER and SEVERAL ORDERLIES, they're having coffee and cigarettes.

PARKING OFFICER

That space is for emergency vehicles only!

PEPPER

This is an emergency! A woman on the bus is about to have a baby! HELP HER!

From his look the Orderlies know Pepper means it, they clamber onto the bus past Art, as bewildered as ever.

ART

This isn't my stop, Pepper.

PEPPER

(holds a twenty)
Tonight it is, Art, catch a cab.

EXT HOSPITAL -- MOMENTS LATER -- PEPPER

examines the dent where the bus caught the neon sign.

PEPPER

Sorry, baby, that must have hurt...

An MTA SEDAN screeches to a stop nearby, CARL EVANS leaps out, fifty, ruddy, the self-important supervisor always with a HUGE CIGAR clenched in an unfriendly mouth.

CARL

Well, Pepper, you have a nice shift?

PEPPER

Not really, but I made the best of it.

CARL

You made the best of it? Tell me the truth, you've been driving so damn long, you think you're an ambulance now?!

PEPPER

Listen, Carl, the damn radio was busted.
Was it my fault the lady was pregnant?

Carl shoves his finger in Pepper's chest for emphasis.

CARL

That doesn't change the fact that you
violated regulations! MY BUSES are
never supposed to be used as emergency
vehicles.

PEPPER

Carl, if I didn't have to drive one of
YOUR BUSES, I wouldn't be caught dead as
a passenger, it's not a nice place out
here, I could give a rat's ass about the
regulations!

CARL

That does it! I want you off! The MTA
doesn't need people like you!

Carl steps to his car, pulls out a clipboard, scribbles on
a piece of paper, Pepper knows the drill.

PEPPER

Oh, great, another referral?

CARL

That's right, it's time to pay another
visit to the review board, and they'll
probably suspend your ass for good.

Carl signs his name with a flourish, holds out the piece of
paper, Pepper looks at it but won't take it.

CARL

Your life's a real tragedy, Pepper.
What you gonna do now? Become a janitor
for an insurance company in Omaha?

Carl shoves the paper in Pepper's pocket, walks away, his
voice trails off as the SUN breaks over the roof of the
hospital, blinds Pepper with its brilliance.

CARL

Be at the barn for the afternoon shift,
I had somebody else lined up to break in
a rookie, but since you're the ex-best
driver I got, I can't think of a better
way to send you out the door...

PEPPER

Yes, sir, you're the boss, I'm just the driver, anything you want, just ask for it, why, I'll even train my own replacement! God, I love this job!

INT BACHELOR PAD -- DAWN -- A TANGLE OF SHEETS

with arms and legs coming out everywhere, as a radio alarm clock plays music, and CURTIS FOSTER pokes his head out, handsome, twentysomething, with a friendly face and a twinkle in his eye, he's God's gift to the universe, and the dangerous part is he knows it.

CURTIS

Hey, girl, it's time to face the day.

A covered figure stretches under the sheets, coming up for air is KENYA WERNER, a beautiful African-American in her twenties, the tender smile and tilt of her head are like Cupid's arrow shot straight at Curtis' heart, he leaps up and dances on the bed.

CURTIS

Butter butt, butter butt, butter butt,
butter butt, butter butt, butter butt!

As Kenya laughs, Curtis dashes out of the room. Silence.

KENYA

Curtis, honey, what are you doing?

Curtis springs around the corner with three dozen roses, tosses them onto the bed, creates a blanket of red aroma.

CURTIS

Happy Anniversary! One month of BIG
LOVE!

Curtis lowers himself over Kenya who is in ecstasy.

CURTIS

If God came down from heaven, stopped me on the street and said, Curtis Evans, right this very second, you're comin' with me, I'd have no regrets, whatsoever, because in all of space and time, throughout the entire universe, from the beginning of creation to the end of the apocalypse, YOU ARE THE BEST!

But Kenya's laughter suddenly becomes tears, which she tries to fight, as Curtis caresses her face with,

CURTIS

What's the matter baby? Did I say something wrong?

KENYA

No, no, no, I'm just so happy. I never met anybody like you, and sometimes I get afraid. My best friend tells me to pinch myself, but what if I wake up?

CURTIS

This is a dream you don't wake up from. Roll with that.

KENYA

I want to, but sometimes I get scared, I don't want to lose you, you're so honest, you're so good, and it took me a long time to really trust again...

(nuzzles close)

...I do trust you.

Curtis and Kenya move in a sexy way until Curtis spies the clock and winces with,

CURTIS

Baby, your gentle Curtis is late for destiny, so you have to get your sweet butter butt into the shower.

KENYA

What's so important that you have to do on the 4th of July?

CURTIS

I've got to prepare for a big trial that starts tomorrow, but that doesn't mean we can't set off some fireworks tonight.

Curtis playfully nudges Kenya through the door to the bathroom, then picks up an ATHLETIC BAG, shoves the corner of a BLUE SHIRT back inside, frowns, snatches up a pile of paperwork with OVERDUE and EVICTION NOTICE stamped in bright red, shoves the stuff under some magazines.

CURTIS

Hurry up, Kenya, darlin', I'm gonna be late.

Kenya opens the bathroom door, holds up an envelope stamped PAST DUE in bright red, Curtis snatches it away, answers Kenya's curiosity with,

CURTIS

The main problem with a big law firm is that we work first and have to bill later, some clients take advantage, so we refer them to a collection agency.

(pulls her close)

Baby, when God made woman, he used you as the blueprint--

Kenya puts her hand over Curtis' mouth, searches his face.

KENYA

You're right, it is a dream...

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Good morning all you rock and roll animals, we're going to kick off our nation's birthday...

INT SEEDY HOTEL ROOM -- DAY -- A FADED CANVAS CURTAIN

flaps too loud near a table where a .44 GRIZZLY WYNMAG, the biggest handgun in the world, sits next to an OLD RADIO.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

...with something new from Guns'n Roses, their very own interpretation of THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER!

NILES CLEMENTE listens to the electronic feedback, thirty, with a lean, mean face that exudes anarchistic power from every pore, he's dressed in UNDERSHORTS and BIG BOOTS, dances around the room like a caged animal, a TATTOO on his back reads, KILL ME, I HAVEN'T BEEN DEAD BEFORE, he stops to suck the smoke from a cigarette burned down to the filter, flicks it out the window and dances real wild as Axel Rose screams real loud.

EXT MARTIN HOUSE -- DAY -- CLOSE ON AN AMERICAN FLAG

which is unfurled by a NEIGHBOR, as Pepper drives his BEATER OF A BUICK into the driveway of his house.

INT MARTIN HOUSE -- DAY -- PEPPER

steps into the modest, middle class interior and surveys its contents, he silently asks himself what it's all real worth, and the answer brings a sad expression.

VOICE (O.S.)

Pepper, darling, what on earth happened to you?

JENNY MARTIN is fifty but ageless, her confidence wise compassionate, she shuffles into the room in a bathrobe

PEPPER

Just a normal day on the number four.

JENNY

You had a bad day?

PEPPER

I've had a bad decade.

JENNY

Well, get out of those dirty clothes,
take a shower, and I'll fix you some
French Toast...

(silence)

...sweetheart, what is it?

All at once, Pepper quietly explodes with,

PEPPER

When I see women wait in the cold at 3
AM and watch kids get on my bus who are
shot and bleeding while drug dealers do
their business in plain sight, and I
throw a sleeping person off my bus who
doesn't have anywhere else to go...

(tears well)

...I FEEL like I'm worth nothing, Jenny.
I've been paid to drive around in
circles all my life, and I feel cheated.

JENNY

Oh, Pepper, darling, you're gold to me.

Jenny puts her arms around Pepper as the two companions
stand in the morning light.

INT MARTIN KITCHEN -- DAY -- JENNY

cooks French Toast while Pepper sits, eats and reads the
paper, at the back door CORRIE MARTIN, twenty-five,
athletic, quick with a smile, Pepper and Jenny's daughter
comes in wearing a jogging suit, sweat matts her hair.

CORRIE

Can a tired jogger take refuge from the
rush hour for a few minutes?

JENNY

Corrie, darling, come in, have some
breakfast, how many miles was it today?

CORRIE

Kilometers, mom, ten, which works out to about six miles, I just did a personal best.

PEPPER

Good morning, OFFICER...

JENNY

All right, Pepper, let's not start, she just got here.

PEPPER

She started it when she became a cop in the most dangerous city in the world. People hate cops, Corrie, which makes their job even more impossible, it can't be done right, never.

CORRIE

People do hate the police, but the second there's a problem, who's the first person they call? Somebody's got to do the job, and that somebody's me.

PEPPER

And just what do you think you're going to accomplish that other people haven't had a crack at ten times already?

CORRIE

Personal contact with people, understanding the source of crime, poverty, lack of education--

PEPPER

--yeah, yeah, yeah, all these big ideas, big concepts, but come back to me in a couple of years, girl, and tell me how much you want to save the world, because I've seen it, and it doesn't work the way you're saying it does...

Corrie looks at Jenny, she can't get through to Pepper.

PEPPER

...and in the mean time, all you'll end up doing is make your mother cry. I'll be standing at your funeral, with your mother--

JENNY

--PEPPER MARTIN! I won't allow that kind of talk in my house!

The silence is absolute, Corrie stares at her father, Jenny clutches the frying pan, and Pepper is about to launch a new attack when a distant HORN honks outside.

PEPPER

That's Clutch, I have to go.

JENNY

Where? You just got home?

PEPPER

Dickhead wants me to train a rookie,
I'll be done by eight, we're still going
to have that barbecue, right?

(silence)

That is, if anybody in this family still
likes me by then. Listen, Dirty
Harriet, try not to make my day, okay?

Corrie doesn't laugh, Pepper picks up his leather bag,
steps to the backdoor when his arm is grabbed by Jenny.

JENNY

That was uncalled for, Pepper.

PEPPER

I have to say what I feel. I care about
her safety, but she doesn't know it.

JENNY

Yes she does, but you continue to blame
her. She didn't ask you to care. You
made that choice.

Pepper hears what Jenny says but can't quite process it,
the horn honks again, Pepper kisses Jenny and is gone, as
Corrie steps up behind Jenny.

JENNY

It's the bus, it got us through some
pretty hard times, and I think it's like
an old friend he can't talk to anymore.

CORRIE

We did have some good times on that bus.
Maybe I should go down and meet him at
the end of my shift.

JENNY

That's a good idea, he'd love it.

Jenny hugs Corrie like only a mother can hug a daughter.

EXT MARTIN HOUSE -- DAY -- PEPPER

gets into the passenger seat of a CHERRY 1969 CHEVY IMPALA, behind the wheel is CLUTCH, forty, hefty, Pepper's best friend and an MTA driver.

CLUTCH

Hey, kimosabe, how goes it?

PEPPER

Clutch, my friend, I can't imagine a worse shift than I had last night.

INT BIG MUSCLE CAR -- DAY -- JIMMY FORSYTHE

drives, he's twenty, gangly, an energetic gum-chewer, Niles Clemente rides shotgun, his uninhibited evil keeps him from being a ladies man, even though he acts that way for LYDIA STORM, not her real name, but whose is in this world, a buxom, chain-smoking blond, she sits in the backseat with her boyfriend, RILEY MCINTYRE, thirtysomething, strong features, with a forceful, economic style.

LYDIA

What're you lookin' at?

NILES

What everybody else does, and I like what I see.

LYDIA

Where'd you find this one, Mac?

MAC

Friend of Jimmy's, says he's okay, you okay, man?

JIMMY

He's okay, like I said, he's okay.

MAC

So, what's the deal? I won't have any trouble with the owner?

LYDIA

He's a limp dick with a bad toupee, keeps all his money in this naked Geisha safe, maybe Jimmy's friend should take it home afterwards for a little party.

NILES

Hey, what's with you bitch, look but don't touch?

McIntyre leans forward in the seat, taps Niles' arm with

MAC

Look, man, you're here because Jimmy says you're okay, but try any harder, and you're out of this deal, got it?

NILES

Hey, what the fuck do you expect me to do? She's a stripper, she takes money to flash her tits.

The Big Muscle Car rolls to a stop down the street from the 20/20 Club, Lydia gets out, Mac squeezes her hand with,

MAC

Noon, Lydia...

NILES

I'll be seeing MORE of you, Lydia.

Niles makes Lydia shiver with his mean smile.

EXT VENICE BOULEVARD -- DAY -- CLOSE ON A CELLULAR PHONE which Curtis has to his ear as he weaves through traffic.

CURTIS

Whassup, whassup, is Kenya there?

L'LL-2-MUCH (PHONE)

Who's this?

CURTIS

What do you mean who's this? It's me, Curtis, the man, mack-daddy in effect.

Curtis pulls the car to a jerky stop at a RED LIGHT.

L'LL-2-MUCH (PHONE)

What do you want?

CURTIS

What do I want? I want you to put your roommate, Kenya, on the phone and take your tired ass to the dog pound with the rest of the mutts.

Curtis pulls the phone away from his ear as LOUD FEMALE CHATTER comes over the line, the light turns GREEN, and cars behind Curtis HONK their horns.

L'LL-2-MUCH (PHONE)

Listen, Romeo, Kenya's busy! And who you callin' bitch anyway!

CURTIS

I'm callin' you bitch, bitch, and I'm bein' polite, so put Kenya on the phone.

L'LL-2-MUCH (PHONE)

Sorry, Romeo, I'm screenin' all her calls, so get in line.

More horns HONK, bringing Curtis to the realization he blocks traffic, he grinds gears, but they won't go in.

CURTIS

Listen, I ain't got time to mix it up with no jealous sister who ain't got her own, put Kenya on the line!

The traffic light flickers GREEN to YELLOW to RED just as,

Curtis finally shifts gears, pops the clutch, and his car lunges forward, right into the path of the Cherry 1969 Chevy Impala and KERKRASH!!!

Curtis pulls himself up out of the seat, peers over the windshield, as the phone dangles from the mirror.

CURTIS

Lookit this, lookit this! Somebody's gonna get their ass kicked!

L'LL-2-MUCH (PHONE)

You get in a accident? Ha, ha, ha!

The Chevy's door opens, Clutch steps out, as Curtis over-exaggerates a limp and holds his neck.

CURTIS

Oh, shit, I'm hurt real bad! I hope you got some insurance.

CLUTCH

You hit my car and want to know if I've got insurance? What circus did you escape from?!

CURTIS

Don't step to me talking that madness, or I'll whup your ass right here in broad daylight, and if you can't back up off that shit, if we can't communicate on a higher level than that... fuck you.

Pepper rises out of the car with,

PEPPER

Cool it, man, it's obvious who's at fault here, I'm a witness, you jumped the light and hit my friend's car.

CURTIS

Uh uhn, you may think I don't know what this is all about, but I read that expose in the LA Times about the BUMPER RUMPER SHAKER FRAUDS, and you, my friend, look just like the ring leader, Mr. Bumper Rumper Shaker himself, so I'm gonna get the Times on the phone, and expose your ass.

Curtis picks up his cellular, dials as Pepper stares, astounded, but something in Clutch's attitude changes.

CLUTCH

Shit, Pepper, what if this gets into the paper?

PEPPER

Give me a break, Clutch, this guy is hustling you!

CLUTCH

But I'm a bus driver, I can't afford to have this mess up my insurance.

Pepper turns, realizes Curtis strains to hear their conversation, so he pulls Clutch away with,

PEPPER

The guy's a con man, Clutch, he's bullshitting you, can't you see that?

CURTIS

Give me the Metro Bureau Chief will you?
(rubs his neck)

People like you are the reason insurance rates are skyrocketing. You shouldn't play around with insurance companies, they don't like to lose.

CLUTCH

Wait, my insurance company, we don't have to get them involved, do we? What if I gave you a hundred dollars for your damage?

PEPPER

Jesus, Clutch, don't do this.

CURTIS

And what if I laughed in your muthafucking face? That is a forty thousand dollar, top-of-the-line Nissan convertible 300ZX, goes from zero to sixty in a heartbeat, why a gallon of gas costs me a hundred dollars.

CLUTCH

How about two hundred?

PEPPER

I can't watch this.

As Pepper gets back in the Chevy, Clutch pulls out two hundred dollars, Curtis instinctively snatches the money, his neck is much better now.

CURTIS

You're a smart man, Clutch is it? Now if you don't go causin' no more accidents, you won't see your face on the six o'clock news. Y'all be cool now, peace, I'm outta here.

Curtis hops into his car, slips on sunglasses, wheels into traffic as Clutch leans into his car with a sheepish look.

CLUTCH

What could I do, Pepper?

PEPPER

That guy was a fucking asshole.

Pepper leans on Clutch's car horn, frustrated, the HONK! echoes across town and blends with,

INT BIG MUSCLE CAR -- DAY -- HONK! -- JIMMY

leans on his horn, swerves, drives on as Niles rides shotgun, chain-smokes and Mac drapes in the backseat.

NILES

You really think the bitch can handle her end? With a body like that you don't expect much activity in the attic.

MAC

The BITCH is my girlfriend.

NILES

Whatever way you say it, I'd like a taste of it.

MAC

That will never happen, my friend.

NILES

I ain't your friend.

JIMMY

Niles don't have any friends, Mac, I forgot to tell you.

NILES

I just want something Mac's got, and it's driving him crazy.

Mac leans forward, stares at the back of Niles' head with,

MAC

If we're gonna do this thing, I don't want you anywhere near trouble unless it bites you on the ass.

JIMMY

Hey, that's cool, right Niles, you're cool with that, ain't you?

NILES

Sure, but don't forget why you invited me to the party, the gun is my thing, and I take the heat for using it, just so you understand.

MAC

(checks watch)
Jimmy, it's time to park.

NILES

I love this country, the land of opportunity, why even a stone cold psycho like me can get ahead.

What lifts Niles' spirit are rows of AMERICAN FLAGS that streak past the car.

EXT MTA YARD -- DAY -- WILD GRAFFITI OF ALL KINDS

is sprayed painted on buses that are washed by crews, Pepper stares at the tarnished behemoths.

PEPPER

(to self)

I can't believe it, we've got cameras, dogs, guards, and they still get in. If they want to be artists, why don't they buy canvas... You think the kids that did this can afford canvas?

CARL (O.S.)
Martin...!

Carl puffs on a big cigar, strides through his domain, holds out several sheets of paper to Pepper.

CARL
...your appointment with the review board is tomorrow night, they want me there to verify your very lousy record.

PEPPER
(holds hands up)
Oh, my God! Carl!

CARL
What is it? What the fuck is it?

PEPPER
With that cigar, in this light, you remind me of a very famous actor in one of his most famous roles.

CARL
Let me guess. Arnold Schwarzenegger, right? Fighting that alien in the jungle?

PEPPER
Naw, Lassie, taking a shit in my backyard.

Carl pinches the cigar in his angry mouth and may just look like the defecating canine, he waves Pepper off with,

CARL
Okay, Pepper, if that's the way you wanna go out...

As Carl moves onto a GROUP OF DRIVERS the RUMBLE of a laboring engine makes Pepper turn, what he sees,

THE NUMBER FOUR BUS idles up to a high whine as a MECHANIC fills it with fuel, suddenly it leaps forward, the mechanic wrestles with the now loose nozzle as FLAMMABLE LIQUID spurts everywhere and,

The Number Four roars through the yard, swerves left to avoid an MTA SEDAN, right barely missing another BUS wheel.

With growing amazement Pepper watches the Number Four closer and closer, he cringes as,

The Number Four heads for the AWNING TO THE BUS WASH, brushes an AMERICAN FLAG that dangles inches from the roof, roars between TWO BUSES that move in opposite directions, it's like the Hippopotamus dance in FANTASIA and,

Pepper realizes the bus heads straight for him at a high rate of speed, he tries to stand his ground as,

POV THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, the bus bores down on Pepper, a small obstacle in the yard, closer and closer until,

SCREECH! THE CHROME MEDALLION on the front of the bus stops an inch from Pepper's chest, he trembles and strides to the front door, knocks, nothing, he's real mad now, POUNDS on the door and HISS! CLUNK! the door opens on,

CURTIS FOSTER who grins big from the driver's seat.

CURTIS

Curtis is in the house! Whassup!
Whassup! My fellow bus... driver?

Curtis sees Pepper and for one of the few times in his life he can't speak, all the veins on Pepper's neck bulge.

PEPPER

YOU!? My replacement?

CURTIS

Hey, you're the cracker that was with the fool that hit my car! Somebody call the police!

PEPPER

That cracker is training you!

As Pepper lumbers onto the bus, Curtis stands with,

CURTIS

You? Yo man, I didn't mean nothing about that cracker dig.

PEPPER

Where's your name tag? Curtis...?

CURTIS

Ain't got one. Foster, Curtis Foster.

PEPPER

Well, let's get a few things straight, name tag's an MTA requirement, I'm your training officer, you'll do what I say, when I say and how I say. If you can understand that, we'll get along fine, if not you'll be lucky to get a job driving a big wheel.

Pepper studies Curtis, his pants hang real low, his shirt is untucked, his shoe laces are untied.

PEPPER

What's with your pants, they're droopy.

CURTIS

Nice, hunh, I snagged 'em at Saks Fifth, the shoes, man, are filled with organic fluid grown in hydroponic laboratories expressly for flyin' around the stadium of your choice.

PEPPER

You got a belt?

CURTIS

What for? This is the LOOK, man.

PEPPER

The LOOK is ridiculous.

CURTIS

Uh hunh, well, whassup with the K-Mart shirt? And why are your pants up around your chest, you waitin' for a flood? And those Frankenstein shoes, I bet I can hear you before I see you.

Pepper controls his temper, reaches into his leather bag, comes out with BLUE SUSPENDERS.

PEPPER

Put these on before you embarrass yourself.

Curtis shrugs, flips the suspenders over his shoulders, watches Pepper take a PORCELAIN BUS out of his leather bag, put it on the dashboard, WORLD'S GREATEST DAD is where the destination sign should be, rummaging around in his bag,

Pepper notices the .22 PISTOL, he forgot it was in there from last night, bringing him back is,

CURTIS

You're kind of a sentimental type, ain't you, Pep?

PEPPER

I don't know what you're talking about. What's that in your pocket?

Curtis comes out with a SONY WATCHMAN.

CURTIS

I'm a METS fan myself, a lousy team, but a great city, we can watch the game.

PEPPER

Sorry, but you're going to be too busy.

Pepper snatches the little TV from Curtis, tosses it in his leather bag, sits in the driver's seat, shifts and,

EXT LOS ANGELES -- DAY -- SHIMMERING HEAT WAVES

distort everything as a blurred shape appears in the distance, suddenly ALL CHROME AND STEEL, sharp focus and rumbling power sweeps across the horizon, stops with the sigh of a laboring beast of burden, a HISS! and a CLUNK! opens the door to let passengers stream on and off. Music up, life on the city streets, it's noisy, harsh. colorful, raw, you've got to love it.

EXT CONSTELLATION AVENUE -- DAY -- JIMMY

pilots the big muscle car into the underground garage beneath the Twin Towers, it's engine belches oily fumes.

INT PARKING LOT "C" -- DAY -- THE BIG MUSCLE CAR

pulls into a space, Jimmy, Niles and McIntyre get out, their long overcoats trail behind, their boots echo on cement, exhaust from the Muscle Car hangs in the air as they walk to an elevator, punch the up button.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- HISS! CLUNK! -- SADIE FROST

sixty, a fixed-income, single woman who needs TWO BIG CANES to get around, ambles onto the bus with a bag of groceries and pays her fare with,

SADIE

Pepper, you goin' downtown?

PEPPER

Every day, all day, Sadie, why should it be any different today?

SADIE
(sits in a huff)
Are you okay, Pepper?

PEPPER
I feel fine, because this is my last day
on the Number Four.

SADIE
Why's that, you goin' on vacation?

PEPPER
Nope, I've been referred to the review
board, and this time it's serious.

Curtis is all ears as Sadie gets into a panic with,

SADIE
But who's gonna take over, Pepper? I
depend on you, to tell me I'm on time,
when my connection is comin' up, if the
schedule changes, when the rates are
raised, I don't like this one bit, and
I'm gonna write a letter sayin' so.

Pepper studies Sadie in the rear-view-mirror, surprised by
the sincerity of her reaction, he pulls the bus over and,

HISS! CLUNK! Art climbs on board, dressed in a POLYESTER
SUIT, his tie is bunched up over a crooked collar, he takes
off a pork pie hat, reveals hair that's plastered down with
BRYLCREEM, he's on his way to some special occasion, shows
his senior citizen pass, sits down next to Sadie.

PEPPER
Hey, Art, what you doing up so early?

ART
My son's marchin' in the 4th of July
parade. He's a war hero, you know.

Art exhales in Sadie's direction, she smells the booze on
his breath, fans the air and recoils into her seat.

INT ELEVATOR -- DAY -- SCARLET LIGHT

flickers through the elevator as Niles, Jimmy and McIntyre
ride in silence, the thump of loud music rises in volume .
Niles checks his .44 Grizzly Wynmag beneath his coat.

MAC
Okay, it's a simple deal, you watch the
main room while Jimmy and I do the safe.

The glass elevator rises to ground level, daylight pours in, the doors open, the men exit the elevator and face the NEON SIGN which reads 20/20.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- PEPPER

stands, steps back, gestures to the driver's seat with,

PEPPER

Okay, Mr. Andretti, it's your turn.

Curtis sits in the seat, yanks on the lever, the seatback shoots down flat, Pepper's leather bag falls on the floor.

PEPPER

No, no, you don't adjust it like that.

Pepper grabs the lever, pulls the seatback into place, as Curtis fusses with the mirror, checks his teeth, hums, turns on the fan, aims it at himself, enjoys the breeze, all of which really irritates Pepper.

PEPPER

Stop playing around and drive, we've got a schedule to keep here.

CURTIS

Hey, I have to know how the equipment works, man.

Curtis grabs the shift, but grinds the gears horribly, Sadie and Art watch the show, entertained.

PEPPER

Hey, hey, HEY! Don't force it. The Merrymaker needs to be treated gently.

CURTIS

The what...?

PEPPER

Every bus has a personality, I call this one the Merrymaker, and if you treat her with respect, she'll reward you in kind.

CURTIS

Shit, Pep, I didn't know we were dealing with a higher state of consciousness here.

Curtis shoots Pepper a killer smile, but grinds the gear again, Pepper reaches out, gives the gear shift a special pat, and the transmission engages like an obedient pet.

CURTIS

Hey, thanks for the lesson, maybe I can return the favor sometime, you know I used to test drive cars for Mercedes in Europe on the Autobahn, three hundred, four hundred miles an hour at a time.

PEPPER

The only thing you've got that moves that fast is your mouth.

INT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- MAIN ROOM -- NILES

steps into the sophisticated club as an ATHLETIC STRIPPER dances on stage to a thumping techno-beat.

INT 20/20 CLUB -- HALLWAY -- DAY -- THE FIRE DOOR CHAIN

dangles silently from the handle, unhooked, as STRIPPERS move in and out of a dressing room.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CURTIS

pulls the bus to a stop with a HISS! a CLUNK! and peers out the front door past Pepper with,

CURTIS

My first fare...

At the door stands RUBEN SERRA, thirty, homeless, he wears a dingy, black coat, a dayglo construction vest, naked lady cuff links, a Dodger's baseball hat, carries an Umbrella, a rag bag and a bucket of incense mixed with too-old roses.

RUBEN

Say, man, you want some incense? Only a dollar.

CURTIS

Does this look like a swap meet? It's a bus, and we don't sell nothin' on a bus.

RUBEN

C'mon, I got a scent for every season, and a rose for that special someone, dim the lights, fire up the incense, turn on the music, and you're in there. The holiday special's a buck-fifty for both.

CURTIS

Man, do I look like I need help in the bedroom? Get your ass off the bus.

PEPPER (O.S.)

I'll take one of your specials...

Pepper digs into his pocket and finds some money.

PEPPER

The job of a good bus driver is to keep the peace on your ride, and if it costs a buck or two, it's worth every penny.

Ruben takes the money, drops it into the tiller, hands Pepper a rose and finds a seat as Curtis sucks his teeth, pulls the door shut, Pepper studies him as he drives on.

PEPPER

Tell me, Curtis, why do you want to drive a bus?

CURTIS

I gotta get mine, it's late in the day for the brothers, and I refuse to get caught outside without a life.

PEPPER

And you decided THIS was going to be your LIFE?

CURTIS

THIS is only the beginning, I got big plans, you see if a man only reaches for what he can get, he hates himself for what he thinks he never did...

Curtis hits a nerve as Pepper stares at a far-off horizon.

CURTIS

...how long you been drivin', Pepper?

PEPPER

Since you were in kindergarten.

Curtis hears Pepper's weariness, takes his attention off the road during a turn and CLUNK! BOOM! the bus heaves over a curb, throwing around Art and Sadie.

ART

Where the devil did you get your license, a Crackerjack box?!

PEPPER

Nice, Curtis, like the Autobahn, right? The Merrymaker won't take a turn like that, you have to steer her wider.

Curtis spins the steering wheel, nods and tries to act appreciative of Pepper's knowledge.

INT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- HALLWAY -- MAC AND JIMMY

push open the fire door, step through, glance left and right, walk toward a MUSCULAR BOUNCER who watches over STRIPPERS moving up and down the tight passageway, Mac steps behind him, shoves a SNUB-NOSED .38 into his ribs.

MAC

Walk ahead of us, use your key and open the office door.

Stiff and nervous, the Bouncer heads for a door, Mac and Jimmy follow as keys rattle while chattering Strippers pass, oblivious to the situation.

INT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- OFFICE -- THE OWNER

looks up from paperwork as the Bouncer gets shoved into the room, Mac and Jimmy are behind him, the .38 leading their way, and now Jimmy has a .45 AUTOMATIC in his hand.

OWNER

Who the fuck are you?

MAC

Lock the door.

Jimmy locks the door as Mac steps forward with,

MAC

Open the safe.

OWNER

I don't know what you're talking about, mister.

SMACK! Mac belts the Owner in the teeth with the .38, he falls on the floor near the NAKED METAL GEISHA, her left nipple is a COMBINATION LOCK TUMBLER.

The Owner's TOUPEE slips off his bald head, and he whimpers when Mac nudges him with his foot.

JIMMY

It's just like you said it was gonna be, Mac, this is too easy.

MAC

Shut up!

(to the Owner)

Open the fucking safe!

The Owner grunts to his knees, tries to make trembling fingers work as he twists the Geisha's nipple.

EXT WESTWOOD -- DAY -- THE NUMBER FOUR

rolls through the congested streets of Westwood, passes restaurants, galleries, book stores, co-eds in shorts, jocks in tank tops, movie-goers, shoppers.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CURTIS

pulls the bus to a stop with a HISS! a CLUNK! and the door opens on a TRANSIT POLICE OFFICER, thin, pale, his uniform looks too small, his gun looks too big as he silently nods and walks past Curtis and Pepper to a seat near the back.

PEPPER

Those guys are as useless as tits on a mule, most of them drink on the job, and they get scarce when there's trouble.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, Pepper, how's it going?

Onto the bus steps HENRY PARK, twenty, Korean, a UCLA med student who carries textbooks under one arm and a folded uniform and hat under the other.

PEPPER

Henry, how's school?

HENRY

Great, this week we're studying the human skeleton, and it's pretty interesting, did you know the university buys them in India, now don't ask me where they come from inside India, but--

PEPPER

--that's really interesting, Henry, but we got more passengers to take on here.

Pepper gestures down the aisle with a thin smile, Henry nods, moves to a seat, as Curtis glances out the door and what he sees causes him to moan.

PEPPER

What's the matter with you?

Coming up the steps is KENYA WERNER, behind her is L'LL-- MUCH, twenties, over-weight, Kenya's best friend, they carry RED WHITE AND BLUE BALLOONS with "I LOVE YOU" on them, pay their fare but Kenya freezes with,

KENYA

Curtis!

CURTIS

Kenya...?

KENYA

You're a bus driver?! You drive a bus?!

L'LL-2-MUCH

Pinch yourself, sister, 'cause you just woke up. I thought you said he was legal, but all I see is Mr. Goodwrench.

PEPPER

Let's go, Curtis, you're getting behind schedule.

CURTIS

Look, gimme a minute to explain, I'm doin' undercover work on a transit liability case.

L'LL-2-MUCH

Yeah, explain why my best friend is a blueprint for all sisters, you also an architect in your spare time?

CURTIS

Ain't nobody talkin' to you.

L'LL-2-MUCH

Listen Kenya, if he lied about this, no tellin' what else he lied to you about.

KENYA

(crushed)

It was a nice dream... then I woke up.

Kenya abruptly moves to a seat, L'll-2-Much screws up her face at Curtis, moves on, as Curtis sits there, stunned.

CURTIS

Do me a favor, Pep, drive the bus for a minute.

PEPPER

Nope! You drive the bus. I supervise.

CURTIS

C'mon, that's my girl, and we've got this little misunderstanding, I need to clear the air.

PEPPER

If it's like the misunderstanding you and Clutch had this morning, I need two hundred dollars to clear the air.

CURTIS

Yo man, that ain't fair.

Pepper holds out his hand, Curtis stands, reluctantly produces the two hundred dollar bills, slaps them into Pepper's hand and is surprised when Pepper hands him Ruben's old, tired ROSE with,

PEPPER

Holiday special, only two hundred dollars, you've got until the next stop.

Pepper laughs, settles into the seat, shifts and drives.

Down the aisle, Curtis approaches Kenya with the wilted rose, she deliberately ignores him by reading a book.

CURTIS

Can I talk to you for a second, Kenya?

L'LL-2-MUCH

She don't want to talk to you. Can't you understand? Am I speaking English here or what?

CURTIS

Your lips are movin', but what's comin' out sounds like Daffy Duck, woman.

L'LL-2-MUCH

Look muthafucka'--

KENYA

--maybe he does deserve a chance to explain himself.

L'll-2-Much rolls her eyes, moves to the seat behind, where Ruben hangs on every word, as Curtis slides in next to Kenya and offers the rose with,

CURTIS

Okay, I fucked up, I exaggerated the truth a little, and I'm sorry.

RUBEN

He's sorry.

L'LL-2-MUCH (O.S.)

Sorry is right!

CURTIS

If you're trying to annoy me, you're both succeeding.

CURTIS (CONT.)

Look, the first time I meet somebody, I know in about two seconds what they want me to be, it's like a vibe I get, and when I saw you, I knew you expected commitment, sensitivity, understanding, didn't I give all those things to you?

L'LL-2-MUCH

What's this, some afternoon hiphop soap opera, never made it outta rehearsals?

RUBEN

Oh, but he's a very convincing actor, she may go for it.

Curtis resists saying something to L'll-2-Much and Ruben because Kenya now glances at the rose.

CURTIS

And this vibe told me, if she knows I'm a bus driver, she won't pay me no attention, so I went over-budget on my ride, but we traveled in style, and the security deposit for the condo took all my cash, but we had a cozy love nest, and I did it all because of you.

Kenya takes the rose, gives Curtis that special look.

L'LL-2-MUCH

Now the string section's playin' real loud, everybody's got their hankies out, all choked up, but search me what for.

CURTIS

(that did it)

Listen, bitch, why don't you take your tired ass for a long walk on a short leash!

Kenya tosses the rose in Curtis' lap.

RUBEN

Woops, she's gone, you blew it, man.

CURTIS

Shit! I didn't mean that, sorry.

KENYA

Curtis, I don't really care whether you drive a bus or are a millionaire, the real truth is I can't trust you. You knew how much I was hurt, and now it's happening again.

Kenya's eyes brim with tears, Curtis wants to reach out, but Kenya tenses at the attempt.

CURTIS

I am so sorry, baby. True love is such a precious thing, and it looks like I'm payin' that bill.

KENYA

Why don't you just refer it to a collection agency?

RUBEN

L'LL-2-MUCH

Oooh, that was cold! Girl, that's tellin' his ass!

Curtis watches as Kenya holds the "I LOVE YOU" BALLOONS out the window and lets them go sailing off into the air.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- THE "I LOVE YOU" BALLOONS rise up from the bus between the high rises of Westwood.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR - DAY -- PEPPER

Pepper glances in the rear-view-mirror with,

PEPPER

Time's up, Curtis, you gotta drive.

Down the aisle, Curtis stands, hope still on his face, but Kenya is a cypher.

CURTIS

Kenya, please, I got so much more to say, where's your stop, I'll pay for your transfer, but please don't get off the bus.

At the front of the bus, Curtis plops into the driver's seat, dejected, grinds gears and steers into traffic.

PEPPER

Bullshit always stinks worst to the person who spreads it, my friend.

CURTIS

This ain't about bullshit, Pepper!

Pepper is impressed by Curtis' anger.

BARKER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, in honor of our nation's birthday...

INT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- THE BARKER

fifty, sporting a tuxedo, thin moustache and sagging gut, stands before a glittering curtain.

BARKER

...rockin' and rollin' across the stage of the famous 20/20 club, I present the fabulous L-L-L-L-L-LYDIA STORM!

The curtain parts, Lydia steps through in a SEQUINED RED, WHITE AND BLUE BIKINI, amazing as her body was in clothes, now she inspires unquestioning patriotism, especially to,

Niles who sits front row, center, claps loud, whistles and downs a whiskey which he chases with a beer.

But Lydia doesn't want to strip for this guy so she moves down the ramp to a GROUP OF JOCKS dressed in shorts and USC T-SHIRTS, they are very inspired by her wardrobe but,

Niles holds up a ONE DOLLAR BILL, flicks it, and Lydia must move over in front of him, she masks contempt, unbuckles her top, lets it all hang out for Niles when,

A HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL is held high in the air by one of the Jocks, Lydia pouts at Niles, this is her chance to escape, she dances for the Jocks, a move which infuriates Niles.

JOCK

Come over here, baby, that's it...

The hundred dollar bill gets tucked into Lydia's panties as the Jocks pile all over each, and Lydia rewards them by tossing her BIKINI TOP in their direction.

ALL THE JOCKS

Red, WHITE and blue! Talk TRASH to me, honey! Show us your CRACK, baby! Get off of me, you MORON! Kiss me, STUPID! I love this COUNTRY! Gimme a HICKEY right here on my Johnson!

To Niles all the words get re-phrased in a kind of paranoid dyslexia that fans his rage, he's losing control.

IN NILES' HEAD

WHITE TRASH! CRACKER! MORON! STUPID! COUNTRY HICK!

Lydia watches Niles' inner turmoil as he stands, strides over to the Jocks, tries to get their attention with,

NILES

What did you say to me?

JOCK #1
She's fine, isn't she?

JOCK #2
She's great to look at, right?

The Jocks go back to watching, so Niles pulls out his Grizzly WynMag, grabs Jock #1's arm, spins him around and shoves the big gun up his nose with,

NILES
Hey, I'm fucking talking to you?!

Lydia brushes against Niles, tries to distract him from his crazy mission, and he viciously pushes her backward with,

NILES
Later for you, bitch!

ALL THE CUSTOMERS turn, mesmerized, as the music skips, falters, stops.

CLOSE ON THE JOCKS' FACES, they are the scared prey, totally still, all eyes on the hunter, Niles.

NILES
All I want is some clarification on what was said. I think I heard, what was it, STUPID COUNTRY HICK?

JOCK #1
Look, man, I don't know what this is all about, but I'm sorry for whatever--

NILES
--you are sorry, you fuckin' spoiled, rich kid, college prick asshole, wavin' your chump change around, stealin' my girl, I oughta teach you a lesson.

Niles snatches Lydia's bikini top from Jock #1.

JOCK #2
Hey, he didn't know it was your girl, it's a honest mistake, okay?

NILES
It's not okay, it's a serious mistake, and somebody's gonna have to apologize.

ALL THE JOCKS
I'm sorry, we're sorry, he's sorry...

NILES

Oh, no, that's just not good enough, I mean somebody's really gonna have to show how sorry they are.

Niles likes this part, pulls back the hammer on the Grizzly WynMag, draws it down to Jock #1's lips and smiles with,

NILES

Suck.

Jock #1 acts like he didn't hear things right, but Niles makes puckering sounds, and Jock #1 reluctantly puts his lips around the gun barrel, sucks, chokes, cries as,

A BOUNCER comes in from the front entrance, but is immediately halted by,

NILES

Anybody moves and he's dead!

JOCK #1

(mouth full)

Kwist, mahn, beh kerfaw!

Niles raises the Grizzly WynMag to Jock #1's forehead, holds up the one dollar bill, flicks it.

NILES

Now I want you to dance for this one dollar bill. GET UP THERE!

The Jock cringes from the shout, blubbers and crawls up the ramp, as Jock #2 can't control a smirk which,

Niles notices, and he aims the Grizzly WynMag with,

NILES

You think it's funny? Huhn? Why don't you take your clothes off! C'mon! ALL OF YOU! STRIP!

The whole group of Jocks trip and stumble all over each other as they crawl up the ramp while,

Niles sits and gestures for the show to begin with,

NILES

Music, please!

The BARTENDER fumbles with a CD, and some hard rock tune like Arrowsmith's DUDE LOOKS LIKE A LADY surges through speakers as,

ALL THE JOCKS slowly untuck their shirts, drop their shorts, the revulsion on their faces masks the abject fear.

EXT CENTURY CITY MALL -- DAY -- BARON AND EUGENE

stare at toys for adults in the window of THE SHARPER IMAGE, they walk on past CRABTREE AND EVELYN, DUTTON'S BOOKS and the 20/20 CLUB where music throbs from inside.

EUGENE

Say, Gee, whaddaya wanna be when you grow up?

BARON

I dunno, maybe I'll hit the lottery, y'know what I'm sayin'? I'll live in a big house, with lotsa bitches, lotsa rides in the garage, money, as much as I want, fuck as much as I want...

(then)

...after that maybe I'll go to college, on a football scholarship.

EUGENE

Sounds like pie in the sky bullshit. Gangsta' Gee. That's the way I'm gettin' my shit. Put my serve on, get my loot on, buy a hep hoop and new sneakers.

BARON

I think I'm fuckin' hungry.

EUGENE

No shit. Yo, you ready to get some grub on?

BARON

Naw, can't, my moms is tapped out, I got no funds.

EUGENE

Check, you wanna get paid...?

Baron follows Eugene's gaze to,

AN ELDERLY LADY, she carries a bundle of groceries, her PURSE dangles from her arm, this is too easy.

Eugene tosses his skateboard, jumps on, Baron nervously does the same as Eugene positions himself behind the woman, closes fast, and they talk in loud whispers.

EUGENE

I got this.

BARON

Yo, man, what if she sees you?

EUGENE

And If the Coyote caught the Roadrunner, he'd be chicken soup, you wanna get paid or what?

Eugene moves quick, comes up behind the Elderly Lady, glances back at Baron with a sly smile, then focuses on his target, the PURSE dangles from the Elderly Lady's arm.

Eugene bends his knees, hands out, is about to snatch the purse when he shrugs, straightens up, and looks back at Baron with a "I could if I wanted too" look, but suddenly he loses his balance and falls against the Elderly Lady.

ELDERLY LADY

Oh, what the... my, God! Hey, you!
HELP!

BARON

Aw, Gee, you stepped in some shit now!

Baron hides his eyes, but that's not the worst of it.

VOICE (O.S.)

HEY! HE STOLE HER PURSE!

When Baron looks again he sees TWO YOUNG MEN point at Eugene just as a SECURITY GUARD runs up and raises a whistle to his lips with TWEET!

Running at an angle toward the fleeing Eugene, the Security Guard tosses his night stick, it skitters in a line directly under the wheels of Eugene's skateboard and,

Eugene trips and falls, face first, violently onto the pavement as Baron stops ten yards away, worried.

BARON

Yo, Gee, you all right?

Eugene rolls over on his back as the Security Guard grabs his skateboard, puts his BIG BOOT on Eugene's chest with

GUARD

Got your ass!

EUGENE

Ow, shit, what'd you do that for, I didn't do nothin'.

GUARD

You little pricks are all alike, first you commit a crime, then you deny it.

BARON

He didn't do nothin'!

GUARD

(points at Baron)

And you're an accomplice, my friend, so keep your ass right where it is!

EUGENE

Oh, my arm, oh God, it hurts like a muthafucka, call the paramedics, it feels broke in a million places!

The Security Guard studies Eugene, who is in immense pain, and when he raises his foot a little, that's all the opening Eugene needs, he kicks the Guard in the knee, sends him sprawling, leaps up and runs over to,

Baron who is pushing hard on his skateboard, holds out his arm, catches Eugene, who jumps onto the skateboard with him, and they ride away in tandem.

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- DAY -- EUGENE AND BARON
skateboard in tandem, high on their success.

EUGENE

That was a kick! I coulda had the old bag's bag in a blink if I really wanted.

BARON

We the A team, nobody can stop us, especially not that sucker's tired ass.

The Security Guard still gives pursuit, but he slows to a walk, holds his side, breathes hard as,

An MTA BUS comes to a halt, the front and rear doors open, let passengers on and off, Baron and Eugene sneak through the rear doors, which close as the bus lumbers on.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- BARON AND EUGENE

stoop down in the rear-door-well, then sneak into seats.

At the front of the bus, Curtis glances in the rear-view-mirror, catches the movement, abruptly stops the bus.

PEPPER

What are you stopping for?

Curtis ignores Pepper, stands, marches down the aisle to where Baron and Eugene sit, innocent as angels.

CURTIS

All right, pay up or get off.

BARON

We were here already.

EUGENE

Who the fuck are you?!

CURTIS

All right, all right, off the bus before I kick your little asses off.

BARON

C'mon with it, punk!

Curtis goes for Baron, grabs him around the waist, as Pepper steps up behind Curtis.

BARON

He can't get with this! Let 'em go, we'll gank 'em.

EUGENE

Pepper grabs Curtis' arm, twists it, and Curtis has to let Baron go, then Curtis spins around and gets face to face with Pepper as the Passengers watch and whisper.

PEPPER

What's the matter with you, man?

CURTIS

They snuck on through the back door, they didn't pay.

Pepper turns to Baron and Eugene, his suspicions aroused.

PEPPER

Nobody rides for free.

EUGENE

We got us a transit pass.

Eugene holds out a BRIGHT YELLOW CARD, an innocent look on his face, as Curtis fumes, and Pepper nudges him with,

PEPPER

Well? Check the pass, bus driver.

CLOSE ON THE BUS PASS, Eugene has placed his thumb over the SIGNATURE OF EVELYN JOHNSON, clearly not Eugene or Baron.

Curtis glances at Kenya, who looks away, then heads back for the driver's seat, with Pepper hanging close.

Down the aisle, Baron spins around, gives Eugene a high-five as they walk backwards to seats.

BARON

Ya mama!

EUGENE

Yeah boy, his mama ain't got no heart, talkin' about I feel for you!

EUGENE

No, no, no, his mama got one wooden leg, talkin' about she ain't half-steppin'!

Baron and Eugene sit down across the aisle from Henry, eye him as he reads, whisper some secret conspiracy, laugh.

At the front of the bus, Curtis grinds gears, pulls away from the curb, but Pepper keeps the pressure on with,

PEPPER

Listen, if you want to let off steam because you're pissed at your girl, go to the gym, watch ESPN, but don't take it out on some innocent kids.

CURTIS

All right, I was wrong, they had a transit pass, I shoulda asked.

PEPPER

It was probably stolen or counterfeit.

Curtis studies Pepper, who fights to keep from laughing.

PEPPER

You check the signature on the card?

CURTIS

Pep, are you havin' your way with me?

PEPPER

What I'm saying is that there's more to driving this bus than meets the eye. I'll check the card when they get off.

EUGENE (O.S.)

Hey, you a security guard?

Back down the aisle, Eugene and Baron stretch to get a look at Henry's medical book, Henry casts a quick glance, then buries himself in his studies.

BARON

Glad he don't have no gun, give a Korean a gun and you better duck, sucker.

EUGENE

What you protectin', security guard?

BARON

Gee, I bet he get paid minimum wage to stand in the middle of an empty parking lot, in the middle of the night.

EUGENE

That your job, security guard? I get it, you keep people from stealin' the lines off the pavement, that it?

Baron and Eugene laugh hard, and Henry slams his book with,

HENRY

At least I'm making something of myself, in a couple of years, you'll park my car in the lot I'm guarding right now.

Eugene and Baron are silenced by the remark, they look at each other, nod, then turn and simultaneously,

BARON AND EUGENE

FUCK YOU!

INT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- THE OFFICE -- OWNER AND BOUNCER

lie hogtied on the floor as Mac and Jimmy shove the last of the cash into a gunnysack, tie it off, move out.

INT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- THE MAIN ROOM -- MAC AND JIMMY

move quickly toward loud music, halt in their tracks, see the one thing they dreaded.

MAC

Jesus Christ...!

On the ramp all the Jocks are stripped to undershorts and dance as Mac quickly works his way between tables, comes to Niles, who gestures for him to take a seat as he sniffs at Lydia's bikini top.

MAC

Let's go, man.

NILES
Not yet, show's not over.

Mac peers at Lydia who hovers in the shadow of the curtain.

MAC
Yes it is, you either come now, or we
leave you here.

At the bar, the Bartender picks up the phone and,
Niles rockets out of his chair, holds the Grizzly WynMag at
his side, points without looking.

NILES
PUT THE PHONE DOWN!

MAN (O.S.)
(whispers)
Put it down.

The Bartender immediately drops the phone, glances at a MAN
who holds a .38 POLICE SPECIAL below the counter.

Niles smiles pleasantly at Mac, then suddenly turns, aims
at Jock #1's crotch and BOOM!

The bullet catches Jock #1 in the thigh, blows him backward
and everyone in the club lets out a collective scream.

NILES
Now the show is over, we can go.

Niles calmly walks across the room as Mac and Jimmy follow,
their weapons waving around.

INT ELEVATOR -- DAY -- MAC

seethes as Niles calmly smokes, and Jimmy glances between
the two men, cheery Muzak makes it all very weird.

MAC
We were in and out, no problem, and you
had to fuck it up.

NILES
The dude called me a moron, and nobody
says that to me.

MAC
I'll say it, you're a MORON, and I don't
need a fucking MORON sticking me with a
first degree murder rap, got it?

You don't say that to Niles, he swiftly draws the Grizzly WynMag and puts it to Mac's neck.

JIMMY

Niles, you're really blowing it, man.

NILES

I'm just looking for some UNDERSTANDING, that's all, so why don't we divide the cash, go our separate ways, and we won't ever see each other again for the rest of our lives, however long they may be.

Niles calmly puts the Grizzly WynMag away, and Mac slams the wall of the elevator in frustration.

INT PARKING LOT "C" -- DAY -- MAC, NILES AND JIMMY

exit the elevator, move quickly through the parking lot to the Big Muscle Car when suddenly,

VOICE (O.S.)

Freeze! Put your hands over your heads!

The Man from the bar holds up a BADGE, aims his .38 Police Special as Mac, Niles and Jimmy raise their hands.

MAC

Hey, what's this all about, man, we don't want any trouble.

MAN

You already got it, now lie down on the ground, face down, hands behind your back. C'mon! DO IT!

Suddenly Niles grabs Jimmy's arm, yanks him sideways as a shield, draws his Grizzly WynMag while,

The Man falls to one knee and fires BANG! BANG! BANG!

One bullet catches Jimmy in the stomach, he screams and when he doubles over, reveals behind him, Niles who aims the Grizzly WynMag which erupts with a BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The massive bullets tear into the Man's chest, drive him back against a parked car, instantly dead.

MAC

You hit, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Yeah, man, oh God, it hurts!

Mac helps Jimmy to his feet as Niles peers at his kill, at the elevator several WOMEN with shopping bags step out, peer at the confusing scene, don't know what to make of it.

NILES

Let's get out of here!

Niles helps a stumbling Jimmy into the car as Mac fires up the engine, and the Big Muscle Car burns rubber backwards.

INT BIG MUSCLE CAR -- DAY -- MAC

wheels the car around as Niles glances at a moaning Jimmy.

MAC

Where's the fuckin' exit?

JIMMY

Shit, man, the bullet's in my fuckin' stomach! I can feel it!

NILES

C'mon, Jimmy, suck it up, man...!

(to Mac)

...there! Go that way!

The Big Muscle car roars up a ramp past a sign, ENTRANCE: DO NOT ENTER when suddenly a CAR comes down SCREECH! KERASH! and skids right into them.

EXT CONSTELLATION AVENUE -- DAY -- KEITH MORELY

thirty, ambitious, in tailored linen, stands over some OIL SPOTS on the pavement, paces in frustration, a cellular phone to his ear as SIRENS wail in the distance.

KEITH

Listen, Sarah, I don't care about your fucking barbecue, if I'm working today, so can you! This lunch with Sheik Farouk took over a year to set up, and my goddamn BMW just got stolen! It's twenty blocks to the restaurant, for Christ sakes! This is an emergency!

(then)

I can't reschedule, the 4th of July is just another business day to a raghead!

(then)

No, I don't have ten minutes to wait for a fucking cab!

As Keith scans the neighborhood, some distance behind him MAC, NILES AND JIMMY emerge from the parking garage and move up the street, Jimmy limps badly.

EXT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- TWO LAPD SQUAD CARS

roar to a halt in front of the Club, FOUR POLICE OFFICERS pile out, run inside as,

Down the street, Jimmy gasps, leans against Mac, while Niles walks casually in the lead, almost bored, as more police SIRENS grow louder.

JIMMY

My insides are burnin' up, man.

NILES

So, fearless leader, what's the plan?
'Cause in about a minute I'm outta here.

Mac turns toward the now-familiar HISS! and CLUNK! with,

MAC

C'mon, help me with Jimmy, let's get on this bus and ride a few stops.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- THE DOORS OPEN

for Mac, Niles and Jimmy who clamber onboard, the doors close, and Curtis steers the bus into traffic as TWO MORE SQUAD CARS roar by outside the driver's window.

Pepper eyes Mac as he pays the fare, sits at the front of the bus, keeps his eyes on something ahead as,

Down the aisle, Niles guides Jimmy to the center of the bus, all the seats are taken, Jimmy sweats, winces and tries to control the pain, while in a whisper,

NILES

Easy, boy, you're doing just fine.

Niles glances at Kenya, oozes a lecherous smile, which makes Kenya stare out the window past L'll-2-Much.

L'LL-2-MUCH

He was givin' you the eye, girl.

KENYA

Well he can keep it.

L'LL-2-MUCH

Don't be bitter, girl, there's more fish in the sea than Mr. Goodwrench, you hear what I'm sayin'?

KENYA

I'm too near you not to hear you.

At the front of the bus, Mac stares at the police cars, Pepper follows his gaze and points with,

PEPPER

Looks like somebody's celebrating the 4th a little early in the day.

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- DAY -- FIVE SQUAD CARS

and an AMBULANCE are parked at random angles in front of the 20/20 Club as DETECTIVES, UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS, PARAMEDICS and TRAFFIC CONTROL OFFICERS deploy.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CURTIS

brings the bus to a stop right across the street from the crime scene, lets off SEVERAL PASSENGERS, and a wave of fear creeps onto Mac's face.

Down the aisle, Niles reaches his hand beneath his coat for his gun, as Jimmy blinks away pain, sees the police cars.

JIMMY

Jesus, man, where the fuck are we!?

NILES

Just keep it together, and there won't be a problem.

Further down the aisle, Baron nudges Eugene and tilts his head, they both stare at,

The GUNNYSACK tucked under Jimmy's belt with TWENTY DOLLAR BILLS sticking out of its opening.

EUGENE

It's for real this time, homes, when I say 'go,' we're outta here.

Baron wants to say "NO", but Eugene glares at him.

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- DAY -- TWO MORE SQUAD CARS

pull to a stop as a TRAFFIC CONTROL OFFICER steps into the middle of the intersection, begins to direct traffic, blows her whistle, points at the bus, wants it to get a move on.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CURTIS

watches in the rear-view-mirror as PASSENGERS get off, glances at the Traffic Officer who blows her whistle again.

CURTIS

Just hold your horses...

CURTIS (CONT.)

...can I get a ticket for this?

PEPPER

Every traffic officer I ever met had too much attitude, just let the passengers get off.

Mac keeps a beady eye on all the proceedings as,

Down the aisle, Jimmy coughs repeatedly, spasms send pain through his gut, he's real dizzy.

In a nearby seat, Kenya listens to the ragged cough, stares at the floor, her eyes widen when she sees,

POOLING BLOOD, her gaze follows the drops up to Jimmy's right hand, a stream of blood flows off his fingertips.

Kenya quickly glances up, her eyes meet Niles' steely gaze, he raises a finger to his lips, silently forms the words,

NILES

Keep your mouth shut.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- THE TRAFFIC OFFICER

blows her whistle real loud, holds up a gloved hand to stop traffic for the bus, she's losing her patience.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CLOSE ON JIMMY

as his eyes roll back in his head, he faints dead away and falls backwards just as,

EUGENE

IT'S ON!

Baron lunges from his seat, yanks the gunnysack full of money from Jimmy's belt, tosses it to Eugene, who heads for the backdoor but is halted by Niles who aims the Grizzly WynMag right between his eyes.

NILES

Don't even think about it, grasshopper!

Sadie sees the gun and screams, Art sits upright in his seat, suddenly awake, and the Transit Officer instantly raises his hands while,

At the front of the bus, Pepper reacts to the commotion, stands to get a better look, but is shoved violently back into his seat by Mac who stands, pulls his snub-nosed .38.

Curtis sees Niles in the rear-view-mirror, looks out at the Traffic Officer in the street and leans on the horn.

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- DAY -- THE TRAFFIC OFFICER

puts her hands on her hips, frowns about the loud horn, starts walking toward the bus as,

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- MAC

shoves the .38 into Curtis' ribs, he reacts by raising his hands over his head, and the horn goes dead.

MAC

Put your hands down, you look stupid,
and get this bus out of here. Now!

Curtis glances at Pepper who stares out at,

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- DAY -- THE TRAFFIC OFFICER

who now strides directly toward the bus, she is pissed.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- MAC

shoves the snub-nosed .38 harder into Curtis' ribs with,

MAC

I said! Drive the fucking bus!

Curtis nervously yanks on the gear shift, grinds the gears horribly, they won't engage, Pepper leans forward to help, but Mac whirls and waves the gun in his face with,

MAC

STAY IN YOUR GODDAMN SEAT!

Down the aisle, Niles shoves Eugene away from the door, waves the Grizzly WynMag in a circle as Passengers see the gun, shout and scream, Niles loves the hysteria too much.

NILES

JUST SHUT UP! SHUT THE FUCK UP!

The Transit Officer, hands still in the air, makes a nervous move from one seat to another, his holster gets caught on something, and he reaches down to free it as,

Niles catches the movement in the corner of his eye, thinks the Transit Cop is going for his gun, turns and BOOM!

ALL THE PASSENGERS SCREAM as the Transit Cop falls to the floor, a bloody hole in his chest, he is dead.

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- DAY -- THE TRAFFIC OFFICER jerks her head around as SEVERAL CARS in backed up traffic honk impatient horns, she can't hear any of the mayhem on,

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- MAC

puts the .38 directly behind Curtis' head, pulls back the hammer, this is crazy.

MAC
Just get going! Right now! I mean it!
C'mon! GET GOING!

CURTIS
I'm tryin' to, man, but the fuckin'
thing won't shift!

Defying the danger, Pepper leans forward, slaps the gear shift that special way, it engages, Curtis stomps on the accelerator, spins the steering wheel and,

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- DAY -- THE TRAFFIC OFFICER has to step quickly out the way as the Number Four rumbles forward, she shakes her head and turns to her job.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CURTIS

sneaks a look at Pepper who glances over his shoulder at the receding crime scene, while Mac hovers over the driver's seat, his mind racing.

Down the aisle, all the passengers scream and yell as Jimmy lies on the floor, moans, clutches at his bloody gut.

NILES
Everybody just SHUT UP! Anybody MOVES?
And you're DEAD!

Niles viciously yanks a CANE away from Sadie, jams it through the handles on the back door, blocks the exit.

In the front of the bus, Mac's attention is divided between the chaos in back and where the bus is going.

MAC
What's your name?

CURTIS
Curtis... Foster!

MAC
All right, Curtis Foster, turn right at
the next street.
(over shoulder)
Niles! What's happening, man?

Down the aisle, Niles waves the Grizzly WynMag around with,

NILES
I want everybody over on that side of
the bus, now! You! Down on the flo
I want to see everybody!

The Passengers crowd to one side of the bus, jam into
seats, sit on the floor, try to maintain some kind of cool
as Niles straddles Jimmy, who rocks on the floor, moans.

NILES
Jimmy ain't doin' so good! I don't
think he can walk anymore!

At the front of the bus, Mac surveys the entire 360 degrees
of landscape, turns to Curtis with,

MAC
All right, we don't want any problems
here, we're gonna get off real soon--

WHACK! What was that? WHACK! Pepper and Curtis exchanges
glances, tension, Mac tries to get a look at who beats on
the door, another WHACK! is accompanied by,

VOICE (O.S.)
Open the goddamn door! You're a bus,
aren't you?! Open up!

KEITH MORLEY peers through the glass door, his briefcase
one hand, his cellular in another, he jogs to keep up as

Pepper and Curtis sit there, helpless, and Mac buries his
.38 into Curtis' side with,

MAC
Okay, stop the bus and let him on and
make it quick!

Curtis spins the wheel, with a HISS! and a CLUNK! the
opens, and Keith scurries on, out of breath, he faces,

Pepper, Mac and Curtis, who all sit there, strangely
uncomfortable, until Curtis closes the door, grinds gear
drives on, and Keith raises the cellular to his ear with

KEITH

I made it, Sarah, thank God. I'm going to slam dunk this deal if it's the last thing I ever do on this earth.

PEPPER

Will you please move to a seat, sir--

KEITH

--excuse me, can't you see I'm on the phone? I'll sit down when I'm done.

Pepper shakes his head, Mac hides the .38 behind Curtis as Keith stands there, oblivious, and the bus rumbles forward.

KEITH

Oh, that was just the bus driver, I'm on a bus, can you believe it?

(then)

Right, I'm just a go-anywhere-for-a-deal kind of guy, that's what it takes if you want to play the game in the 90's.

(then)

Okay, Sarah, sorry for the temper tantrum, go finish your barbecue and don't worry about me.

Keith flips the phone closed, looks around with,

KEITH

What's everybody looking at? You've never seen a man on a phone before?

But Keith's eyes widen when he sees Mac's .38 for the first time, he tries to take a step back, but Mac reaches out, snatches the cellular from Keith's hand, shoves him hard,

Down the aisle, where Keith goes sprawling on the floor, at the feet of the passengers, and right up close to Jimmy, who has BLOODY FOAM coming from his mouth.

KEITH

Oh, my God! What's going on here?

RUBEN

Terrorists have taken this bus hostage.

On the floor, Keith jerks his head around, what he sees,

THE FACES OF THE PASSENGERS look down at him with intense frightened gazes, any one of them could be a threat.

Keith pulls out his WALLET, takes off his SOLID GOLD RO...
COMMANDER.

KEITH

I want to make a deal, my father owns a bank, he can come up with millions, on a moment's notice, he knows the chief of police, this watch is worth ten grand, take it!

NILES (O.S.)

And I'll bet your shit doesn't stink either!

Keith looks up as Niles towers over him, the Grizzly WynMag dangles like a big phallus as he snatches the Rolex with,

NILES

I'm sick of you fuckin' suits, you're just a fuckin' crook like me, only I ain't ashamed to admit it, I'm an honest crook, I may steal for a living, but everybody knows it, you steal and call it big business, and that SUCKS!

Niles kicks Keith in the mouth, and he bawls, hysterical.

KEITH

OH, GOD! I DON'T WANT TO DIE!

The passengers crowded on one side of the bus react to Keith's panic, Sadie stands, Eugene and Henry jump up and down, Niles waves the Grizzly WynMag back and forth.

SADIE

What you gonna do, kill us all?

BARON

Yeah, man, you can't shoot all of us at once.

ART

Coward! My son's gonna beat you up!

EUGENE

Yeah, we gonna storm you, take your piece away!

NILES

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

At the front of the bus, Mac has no idea how to control this as Pepper leans forward in his seat.

PEPPER

Can I say something to the passengers? It could make your job a little easier.

MAC

Do it!

PEPPER

(stands)

HEY! Listen to me!

Down the aisle, the Passengers slowly settle, turn and face Pepper, as Niles swaggers in their midst.

PEPPER

The smartest thing for us to do right now is let these men ride as long as they need to, and when they feel like they're safe they'll get off, so just give them plenty of room, and we'll all be okay.

Mac heaves a sigh, scans the road ahead and peers at Pepper's name tag with,

MAC

Thanks, what's your name? Martin?

PEPPER

My friends call me Pepper.

Down the aisle, Keith stands, touches his bloody lip, looks down at his badly torn shirt, when Niles shoves him hard.

NILES

Have a seat, rich kid!

Keith lands in the seat next to Ruben, who shakes his head.

NILES

You shoulda took a cab, man.

EXT CENTURY CITY -- DAY -- A POLICE HELICOPTER

swoops over the Twin Towers as an MTA BUS with the numbers 8324-9 on the roof slowly moves away from the crime scene.

EXT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- A CLOT OF VEHICLES

block the street, UNIFORMED OFFICERS cordon off the area with crime scene tape as a CROWD OF BYSTANDERS gawk and point and gossip while nearby,

LESLIE ANNE STROUD, thirty, aggressive, a street news hound, looks directly into a FIELD REMOTE CAMERA with,

STROUD

This is Leslie Anne Stroud for MetroNews Television, reporting live from Century City, and about thirty minutes ago three heavily armed men robbed Twenty-Twenty, an upscale topless bar located in one of the richest business districts in Los Angeles, but when an off-duty police officer confronted them in a parking garage, things went horribly wrong, one man is dead, and another is critically wounded.

INT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- HALLWAY -- OFFICER CORRIE MARTIN

dressed in full field uniform, steps past a POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER who flashes a photo of the loose chain on the fire door, and walks down the hallway toward,

INT 20/20 CLUB -- DAY -- THE MAIN ROOM -- CORRIE

enters the room, walks past TWO PARAMEDICS who lift up a stretcher carrying the badly wounded Jock as his friends hover nearby, while a DETECTIVE interviews the Owner.

OWNER

...that fire door is always locked, I mean always, and they knew right where I keep my money, now I don't tell nobody that, nobody!

DETECTIVE

Anything else, off the top of your head, that stuck out about these guys?

OWNER

Yeah, I remember someone called someone MAC, and he got mad about that.

Corrie walks on, past TWO DETECTIVES who speak with a CORONER'S ASSISTANT and the Bartender.

BARTENDER

...oh, yeah, he was a regular, came in all the time.

DETECTIVE

Name's Harold Wilson, sheriff's deputy stationed out of Hollywood Division, took three slugs from something pretty big, probably died the second the bullets hit him.

Corrie approaches a GROUP OF STRIPPERS who stand around, smoke, try to make the best of it, her words are slow, confident, meant to settle the women down.

CORRIE

Sorry for the inconvenience, ladies, I'm Officer Martin, I'll be assisting you with your interviews, and I'll try to get you out of here as quickly as possible.

The semi-clothed strippers are tense, tears have caused mascara to run, but one sticks out, a little too calm, distracted, not like the rest of the girls.

LYDIA stands apart, the only woman who hasn't been crying, she lights a cigarette and avoids Corrie's curious gaze.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CLOSE ON PASSENGER'S FACES

all crowded together on one side of the bus, Sadie clutches her cane and shopping bag, she sits next to Art who sneaks a sip of Night Train, in the seat behind him, Kenya backs up against L'll-2-Much who is crammed against the window, behind them Ruben calmly reads a book while Keith futilely tries to pull his torn shirt over bare shoulders, while Baron slumps in the back seat with Eugene who shows less fear than anyone, and Henry leans forward with,

HENRY

That man is very badly hurt. I think he needs medical attention immediately.

Niles lounges all alone on his side of the bus, the Grizzly WynMag cradled in his arm, as Jimmy coughs blood.

NILES

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

BARON

Yeah, keep quiet, punk...

Niles shoves the semi-consciousness Jimmy with his boot, then makes puckering sounds for Kenya who sits right across from him, she buries her face in L'LL-2-Much's shoulder.

NILES

How are you, little lady?
(louder)

Mac! Jimmy's dead, it's time to make tracks outta here!

In the front of the bus, Curtis turns to Pepper with,

CURTIS

What should I do about the regular route?

MAC

Are you kidding me? Don't stop! And change the sign! Put up whatever you say when you want to keep people off.

But Curtis doesn't know how, and Pepper reaches out, types commands into a PROMPTER on the dash.

MAC

That's good, Martin, keep it up, when we decide to get off this thing, I'm really going to need your help.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- OUT OF SERVICE

tumbles into view as the bus lumbers up the street toward,

EXT A BUS STOP -- DAY -- COMMUTERS

on the bench stand when they see their ride coming, but ZOOM! the bus is a blur of silver metal, it roars past, leaving the Commuters in various states of frustration.

COMMUTER #1

Did you see that? He changed the sign and didn't stop!

COMMUTER #2

That's fucked! Somebody should report that driver!

Commuter #1 jogs to a payphone, dials a number.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- MAC

scans the entire landscape, feels okay about what he sees.

MAC

When we get off we're going to need some time, so I want you and the passengers to stay on the bus for at least an hour, don't get off, got it?

PEPPER

I understand.

MAC

Is there some easy way to disable this thing?

PEPPER

I'll pull the distributor cap, you can take it with you.

MAC

Niles! We're going to get off.

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- DAY -- THE NUMBER FOUR

makes a wide turn onto La Cienega and immediately bogs down in HEAVY TRAFFIC, the energetic SOUNDS OF MARCHING BANDS can be heard in the distance.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- MAC

hovers over Curtis, peers through the windshield as Pepper tries to figure this out himself.

PEPPER

It must be a 4th of July parade or something.

Mac turns on Pepper, the .38 aimed from the hip.

MAC

If you knew this was coming, why did you let him turn?

PEPPER

Listen, mister, you're making the calls here, like I told you, I really don't want to see people get hurt, so just tell us what to do, and we'll do it.

Curtis twists the steering wheel in big turns, this is a real driving test.

EXT SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD -- DAY -- A MARCHING BAND

plays something rousing by John Philip Sousa as the MTA B tries to negotiate a narrow path near the parade's route.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- POV THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR

as PARADE FANS wave little American flags, pound on the bus, shout and holler. then suddenly, BANGA!POP!POW!BANG!POW!POP!BANGA!BANG!POP! a string of FIRECRACKERS goes off: right outside the front door.

Pepper and Curtis flinch in unison as Mac rubs his face, confused, they couldn't get off now if they wanted to.

Down the aisle, Art stands and peers out at all the excitement with,

ART

Is this La Cienega and Santa Monica? I gotta get off here!

NILES

Sit down, old man!

Niles shoves Art forcefully back into his seat.

EXT PARADE ROUTE -- DAY -- A UNIFORMED OFFICER ON A HORSE

emerges from the sea of people, scans the area from his high vantage point, trots alongside a MARCHING BAND.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- MAC

snorts, eyes wide, as he sees the Officer and turns with,

MAC

EVERYBODY DOWN ON THE FLOOR, NOW!

Mac pushes Sadie out of her seat, literally picks Art up and tosses him on top of her as,

Down the aisle, Niles shoves Keith, Ruben slinks low where he sits, Niles moves to the next seat, grabs Kenya, who screams as he shoves her to the floor, L'll-2-Much piles on top of her, and the other Passengers crouch down while,

On the floor, Art can't keep still, the music, the noise, the excitement outside, all of it tempts him to sit up, look around, then he sees something that transforms his rugged face into peaceful fulfillment, what he sees,

EXT PARADE ROUTE -- DAY -- A MARINE

marches at the head of a MILITARY BRIGADE, seems to stand in his own, special light, like a hero, it's ART'S SON.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- ART

leaps up, breathless, and moves toward the backdoor with,

ART

My SON! It's him! Let me off! I have to talk to him!

Niles sticks out his leg, trips Art, who tumbles to the floor, the bottle of Night Train shatters, and Art ends up on all fours as Sadie leans forward, she wants to help him

ART

(in tears)

You got no right to hold me on this bus!
My SON! I gotta talk to my--

WHACK! Niles slams the Grizzly WynMag into the side of Art's head, he goes down with a moan, and Sadie leans over to comfort him with,

SADIE

My God! STOP IT! Leave him alone!

(then)

Somebody must have hurt you real bad to make you come out the way you did.

NILES

Just shut the fuck up and keep him quiet!

At the front of the bus, Curtis clutches the wheel as Mac slips down right behind him with,

MAC

Just don't let that cop see a problem on this bus, or things will get OUT OF CONTROL real quick.

PEPPER

We understand that, mister, but your partner is already OUT OF CONTROL.

Mac doesn't have a response for Pepper, and now CLOP! CLOP! CLOP! makes everyone turn, what they see,

THROUGH THE BUS WINDOWS the Officer on the Horse trots closer, Marching Bands, cheering crowds and horse's hooves the only sounds.

THE SHADOW OF THE MAN AND THE HORSE, a modern day Centaur, travels across the faces of Sadie, Art, Niles, Kenya, L'll-2-Much, Keith, Ruben, Henry, Baron and Eugene, all quietly desperate, and finally it disappears.

At the front of the bus, Mac shoves Curtis with the .38, points through the windshield.

MAC

Get us out! Go! There! Over that way!

EXT PARADE ROUTE -- DAY -- THE NUMBER FOUR

rumbles away from the waving flags, the smiling faces, the upbeat music, all mock the secret drama that just passed.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- PEPPER

sighs big and glances from Mac to Niles to Curtis to the mess they just got out of.

MAC

Okay, let's get this over with, Martin,
you remember everything you have to do?

PEPPER

Yes, sir.

At the back of the bus, Baron peers down the aisle, pats Eugene, who slides open a tinted window, holds up a SPRAY PAINT CAN and reaches outside while Henry sits nearby and shakes his head in the negative.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- EUGENE'S ARM

stretches as far as it can out of the window and sprays a crooked **HELP** along the side of the bus.

The Number Four passes through a warehouse district, traffic gets thin, there are no people on the streets.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- NILES

leans close to Jimmy, listens for breathing, maybe there isn't any, and in a whisper,

NILES

It's time to go, Jimmy, we're leaving.

(loud)

Jimmy says goodbye, Mac! He says that we should leave without him!

Niles leers up at Kenya, who shudders and feels helpless.

NILES

I'm really sorry we didn't get to know each other, maybe some other time.

At the front of the bus, Mac looks at Pepper and Curtis, for a moment something soft rises up behind his eyes, Pepper sees it, then it is gone.

MAC

You've been okay, sorry for the trouble.

(points up ahead)

There, that parking lot, pull over there, that's where we're getting off.

(loud)

Niles! We're going for it!

EXT PARKING LOT -- DAY -- THE NUMBER FOUR

rolls to a stop and in the silence can be heard the SOUND OF A CAR ENGINE and SQUEALING TIRES.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- PEPPER

leans forward, looks into the OUTSIDE REAR-VIEW-MIRROR, which reflects the MTA TRANSIT CAR which just stopped.

Down the aisle, Niles peers out the window with,

NILES

We got fuckin' company!

Pepper glances at Curtis, who's hand rests on the door control handle, as Mac nudges him, tense.

MAC

Open it!

Curtis shoves the handle, and the bus door opens on CARL EVANS who stares in at Pepper with a clenched cigar.

CARL

The review board is really gonna bury your ass over this one, Pepper! Are you outta your goddamn mind?

Pepper is in shock, glances over at Mac who raises the .38, about to fire, when Pepper springs from his seat, trundles down the steps and blocks Mac's aim with,

PEPPER

That's right, Carl, the review board will really have something to write home about now! Just stay off this bus, or I'm going to KILL YOU!

EXT PARKING LOT -- DAY -- CARL

can't believe what he hears, puffs his cigar hard with,

CARL

What the fuck is with you!?

PEPPER

Just stay off the bus!

CARL

Fuck you! I'll get on any goddamn bus I want.

Carl puts his foot onto the first step of the bus as,

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- IN THE REAR-VIEW-MIRROR

Niles creeps up the aisle, the Grizzly WynMag poised.

Curtis glances from the mirror to Mac who aims his .38 right through Pepper, suddenly grinds gears, shifts into reverse, twists the wheel, stomps on the accelerator as,

Pepper grabs onto the corners of the door, swings up and kicks Carl square in the chest.

EXT PARKING LOT -- DAY -- CARL

goes sprawling backwards onto the pavement as,

The Number Four lurches backwards into the front of Carl's MTA sedan, smashes it horribly, gears grind, and the bus pulls forward.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- MAC

grabs Curtis by the face, shoves the barrel of the .38 close as Curtis tries to steer the moving bus.

MAC

That was really stupid, man!

Pepper scrambles up the steps with,

PEPPER

Hold it! Hold it! The kid did the right thing...!

(pleads)

...that was my supervisor, he thinks I'm crazy, honest! It's okay! He doesn't even know you're on here!

Curtis wonders how much tension it takes to fire Mac's gun, when Mac slowly lowers the .38.

PEPPER

Please, just let him drive a few more blocks, and you can get off.

MAC

That fuck up almost got you killed!

Down the aisle, Niles lights a cigarette, shakes his head.

NILES

You guys are lucky, if I was up there, you'd both be real dead right now.

EXT PARKING LOT -- DAY -- CARL

scrambles to his feet, his elbow sore, his cigar smashed but his anger is dimmed by what he sees,

HELP is painted on the receding bus.

Back in the parking lot, Carl forces open the bent door of his MTA sedan, gets in and keys the radio with,

CARL

This is Supervisor Evans at La Cienega and Washington, and I've got a problem.

EXT OLYMPIC AND SAN VICENTE -- DAY -- CORRIE

leans against her squad car, holds a wrapped present with a card which reads, *WORLD'S GREATEST DAD*, looks at her watch, scans the street left and right, wonders where her father's bus is, when her radio chirps with,

DISPATCHER (RADIO)

All units in the vicinity of La Cienega and Washington, supervisor reports a possible eleven dash forty-three in progress on an MTA bus, report and respond, over.

CORRIE

This is eight-Charley-fourteen, what BUS LINE was that eleven dash forty-three reported on, over?

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- NILES

sucks smoke from a butt, stares blankly, what he sees,

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- NILES' POV -- THE GLASS WALL

of a building distorts the IMAGE OF THE BUS as it ripples by in rows of windows.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- NILES

stares at the effect, it pleases him, but suddenly he tenses when he sees,

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CLOSE ON THE GLASS -- *HELP*

bends and warps on the side of the bus.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- NILES

leans forward, peers back at something and snarls with,

NILES

Mac, is a goddamn cop following us!?

At the front of the bus, Mac glances from Pepper to Curtis leans over, what he sees,

In the rear-view-mirror is an ND SEDAN that ghosts the bus, a lane over and several car lengths back.

MAC

I don't know, it could be undercover!
(to Curtis)
Don't slow down.

Down the aisle, an evil smirk contorts Niles' face as he paces back and forth with,

NILES

Who's the artist with the spray can?

The Passengers, all crammed on one side of the bus, sit in absolutely silence until,

VOICE (O.S.)

Me!

At the back of the bus, Baron's hand goes over Eugene's mouth as he whispers,

BARON

Shut the fuck up, man!

EUGENE

(shoves Baron)
No, fuck that, dude's fulla shit.
(louder)
Hey! It's me! Back here, muthafucka!

The passengers cringe as Niles looms directly over the teenagers, Baron spins a skateboard wheel, acts casual.

BARON

He didn't mean nothin' by it, mister.

EUGENE

Bullshit I didn't, I ain't goin' out like no punk, he got the gun, let him try and shoot me.

At the front of the bus, Mac twists around, squints in Niles' direction, then glances back to check on Pepper, Curtis and the mysterious car.

At the back of the bus, Niles loves this, he feasts on the young rebel, his lips moist, his eyes twitching.

NILES

Well, well, well, what have we got here?
Are you a, what is it? An O. G.? An original gangster?

BARON

Yo, man, he's crazy, out on leave from the hospital, I'm takin' him back right now, he doesn't know what he's sayin'.

EUGENE

Fuck that bullshit, Baron!

(to Niles)

You so bad, pull it out and cap me off, man, but if you ain't got the right stuff, and you put your forty-four away, I'll kick YOUR ass.

BARON

Gee, man, the fuck are you sayin'?

This really turns Niles on, he calmly puts the gun away and points at Eugene's reversed baseball cap with,

NILES

You know, with that hat turned around, I can't really tell whether you're comin' or goin'.

(yells at Baron)

GET BACK IN THE CORNER!

Baron swallows hard, slides backward, and Eugene tries to act tough when suddenly,

WHACK! SMACK! KUNK! Niles' fists rain down hard on Eugene, he beats the young man mercilessly, Eugene tries to put up some defense, but Niles' punches get through over and over as,

CLOSE ON THE OTHER PASSENGERS, they watch in horror while the beating escalates.

At the front of the bus, Mac takes several steps down the aisle as he keeps the .38 on Pepper and Curtis.

MAC

Niles, what's going on back there?!

In the back of the bus, Niles works himself into a frenzy, snorts hard, puts real weight behind the blows, and Eugene moans under the brutal onslaught as,

Henry tries not to look or listen or care, but the horror is very near to him, and suddenly he strikes out.

SMACK! KUNK! Several punches hit Niles in the face, he freezes, fists raised, totally shocked, then another blow from Henry knocks him backward, and Niles snarls, draws Grizzly WynMag, brings it up and BOOM!

The shot catches Henry in the shoulder and blows him across the seat with the force of a horse kick.

ALL THE PASSENGERS scream as Mac strides down the aisle and pulls Niles away from the bloody scene with,

MAC

Jesus Christ, man, what the fuck are you doing!?

Niles brings the Grizzly WynMag up under Mac's chin, calm, truly unpredictable, and smiles.

At the front of the bus, Pepper glances over his shoulder, leans past Curtis, flips on the RADIO, then takes the MICROPHONE, jams it between the fan and the windshield, which keys the talk button, then Pepper sits down and nods at Curtis, acting as if nothing happened.

Back down the aisle, Mac and Niles dance in a slow circle of hate, Niles with his Grizzly WynMag to Mac's chin, and Mac with his .38 to Niles' belly.

NILES

I thought we had an UNDERSTANDING, Mac?

MAC

You kill me, and it's your funeral, too.

NILES

You really think if I put a bullet through your head at this angle, you'd have enough life left in you to kill me? You want to find out? Hunh? Do you?

From the look on Mac's face, maybe he doesn't want to know.

At the back of the bus, Baron leans close to Eugene with,

BARON

Gee, I told you not to mess with the dude, he's a stone cold muthafucka.

EUGENE

All I got's, my pride, I ain't got nothin' else, I ain't givin' it up.

(cough, cough)

Yo, what's with him, he dead or what?

In the corner, Henry breathes hard, eyes closed, blood all over his uniform, and Baron slides across the seat, he wants to touch Henry but doesn't know where to start.

BARON

What's your name, man?

HENRY

H-H-H-Henry.

BARON

Man... this is bad... I ain't ever seen nothin' like this... you messed up real bad, Henry.

HENRY

P-p-put pressure on it. P-p-put pressure d-d-directly on it.

Baron reaches out with both hands, he's scared to touch Henry, but gently presses on the wound, their eyes meet, Henry thanks Baron with a weak nod.

At the center of the bus, Mac carefully holds his arms out at his sides, speaks through clenched teeth.

MAC

Okay, Niles, I don't want to find out, it's your show, tell me what to do.

NILES

That's smart, man, real smart.

(lowers the gun)

You all hear what the man said?!

(to Mac)

Now get your ass back up there with the driver, or he's gonna fuck us up!

At the front of the bus, Pepper stares down the aisle as Curtis looks in the rear-view-mirror, then Pepper glances around at the road, gasps and points with,

PEPPER

Curtis, look out for the woman! TURN RIGHT HARD!

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD

A MOTHER pushes a STROLLER through an intersection right in the bus' path, she looks up and freezes in terror.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CURTIS

grunts, spins the big steering wheel and,

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD

The Number Four veers sharply right off the street, barely misses the Mother and stroller, jumps the curb, crashes through a NEWS STAND, emerges out the other side.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- MAC AND NILES

are tossed on top of the Passengers and chaos reigns as everyone screams, Mac and Niles wave their guns around but can't get a steady footing.

EXT SIDEWALK -- DAY -- KLONG! KLONG! KLONG! KLONG!

The Number Four mows down a row of PARKING METERS, heads straight for TWO ROLLER SKATERS.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- PEPPER

points and leans close to Curtis with,

PEPPER

They don't know which way you're going!
MAKE A DECISION! GO LEFT!

Curtis spins the wheel to the left and,

Down the aisle, the Passengers get tossed to the other side of the bus, Mac crawls his way forward, and Niles braces himself between two seats, regains his bearings and waves the Grizzly WynMag around like a scorpion's stinger.

EXT CROSSWALK -- DAY -- THE NUMBER FOUR

rolls back onto the street, but just as quickly,

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD

The bus heads straight for a CONSTRUCTION SITE as Curtis wrestles with the steering wheel and,

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE -- DAY -- THE NUMBER FOUR

chews up RED PARKING CONES like candies, smashes through CAUTION SIGNS, crushes a UTILITIES TENT, and CITY WORKERS dodge out of the way just in the nick of time when,

THE ENTIRE LEFT SIDE OF THE BUS plunges into a trench, sends violent jolts and vibrations through the bus.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- BARON

holds on tight to Henry as he moans in pain with each bump in the road, now Eugene slides near to help Baron.

At the front of the bus Curtis struggles with the steering wheel, tries to free the bus from the trench, as Mac stumbles up behind him, holds the .38 near his head with.

MAC
What kind of driver are you? Get
control of this thing!

CURTIS
I'm trying to!

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- THE WHEELS

emerge from the trench, the bus plows through WOODEN
BARRICADES and races away, battered but still rolling.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- PEPPER

glances at Curtis, out of his mind from that driving binge.

PEPPER
We can't keep rolling like this, we're
going to hit something else.

CURTIS
He's right, and next time we may not be
so lucky!

NILES (O.S.)
We got more company, it's that damn
transit cop and the LAPD.

EXT WASHINGTON AND VERMONT -- DAY -- TWO LAPD SQUAD CARS

pull up next to the Number Four, whoop their sirens, flash
their lights, next to them Carl's battered MTA sedan makes
horrible noises, the windows are all busted out, it barely
keeps up with everybody else.

INT MTA SEDAN -- DAY -- CARL

clutches a radio as he tries to steer his mangled car, the
wind and mechanical noise force him to shout.

CARL
He's kidnapped an MTA bus! There are
passengers onboard! The man is crazy!

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- NILES

runs up the aisle, collars Mac and points as TWO MORE LAPD
SQUAD CARS pull abreast of the bus.

NILES
Okay, Mac, they may try to take us! You
ready for that?
(to Curtis)
Keep this thing going!

MAC

But maybe we should stop!

NILES

(in a whisper)

No fuckin' way, we stop and it's LWOP,
when we moved these people over ten feet
it was kidnapping with deadly force.

MAC

But it's all getting way out of control,
man, I don't know what our choices are
anymore.

NILES

And if we get caught, our only choice is
LIFE WITHOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PAROLE!

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- DAY -- A LARGE MAP

of the Los Angeles highway system blinks RED, YELLOW or
GREEN measuring the flow of traffic, and near the center of
the map a FLASHING LIGHT slowly moves toward downtown.

On a table in the center of the room is a SPEAKER which
reports the conversation of Pepper, Curtis, Niles and Mac.

CURTIS (SPEAKER)

What should I do, man?

PEPPER (SPEAKER)

Just keep driving!

The speaker is on a table where two men sit, empty chairs
will fill as others arrive, right now there's LAPD CAPTAIN
JEFF ABBOTT and JOHN HARRISON of CALTRANS, a MICROPHONE
sits on a stand between them, UNIFORMED OFFICERS and
ASSISTANTS work at laptop computers, talk on phones.

CARL (SPEAKER)

You hear that? You hear what he's
sayin'?

ABBOTT (INTO MIC)

This is Captain Jeff Abbott, LAPD, who
am I speaking to?

INT MTA SEDAN -- DAY -- CARL

steers the battered car in formation with the LAPD Squad
Cars, holds the microphone in the wind.

CARL

Carl Evans, senior MTA supervisor, and I've got a crazy driver out here who's had some kind of breakdown! He's taken passengers hostage, somebody's sprayed HELP on the side of the bus and--

ABBOTT (RADIO)

--all right, calm down. What's the driver's name, and do you think he's armed?

CARL

Pepper Martin, and no, but I do think he's lost his mind!

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CURTIS AND PEPPER
peer at the growing convoy of cars outside.

CURTIS

It's hitting the fan, man...

Down the aisle, Mac tries to blink away the confusion as Niles hangs on his neck with,

NILES

I ain't doin' LWOP, man, I swear, I'll start throwin' fuckin' dead hostages out the fuckin' door before I let them take me, man, I swear to fuckin' God.

Niles steps away from Mac, waves the Grizzly WynMag around.

NILES

If this bus stops, I start killing people!

The RADIO on the dash glows, and the MICROPHONE remains keyed between the fan and the windshield.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- DAY -- ABBOTT

stares sharply at the speaker.

NILES (SPEAKER)

Who's gonna die first! Huhn?!

CARL (SPEAKER)

Hear that? That's Pepper, he threatened to kill me! He's very unpredictable, he's always been that way!

ABBOTT

How many other cars are in the area?

ASSISTANT
Three, they should be there now.

ABBOTT (INTO MIC)
Mr. Evans, I've got three metro units near your location right now, and I'm going to order them to shoot out the tires on the bus...

EXT VERMONT -- DAY -- CARL

swerves in the battered MTA sedan as an LAPD SQUAD CAR roars alongside, M-16 SEMI-AUTOMATIC RIFLES are held by UNIFORMED OFFICERS in the backseat.

On the other side of the bus TWO MORE SQUAD CARS pull up, more officers and rifles are inside.

MEGAPHONE VOICE
ATTENTION, PEPPER MARTIN, THIS IS THE LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT, YOU HAVE ONE MINUTE TO STOP THE BUS!

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- PEPPER

listens to the announcement, peers at the RADIO and MICROPHONE, whispers to Curtis with,

PEPPER
What am I getting blamed for now? Can't they hear what's happening?

Down the aisle with Mac and Niles, the Passengers are very nervous, shift in their seats, the Grizzly WynMag is out.

MAC
What the fuck are they talking about?

NILES
You better keep driving!

INT MTA SEDAN -- DAY - CARL

has trouble steering, waves and yells at the LAPD Officers above the roar of wind.

CARL
That's right! He took my bus! Shoot out the damn tires! SHOOT!

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- DAY -- CORRIE MARTIN

steps into the room, scans things, turns to an ASSISTANT

CORRIE

What's going on here?

ASSISTANT

Some bus driver went wacko, kidnapped his own bus and passengers, I think they're going to shoot out the tires to try and stop the bus.

NILES (SPEAKER)

Mac! What's happening on the other side of the bus?

MAC (SPEAKER)

More guns, man!

Corrie instantly realizes something no one else knows, quickly crosses to Abbott who stares at the CalTrans map.

CORRIE

Excuse me, sir, Officer Corrie Martin?

Abbott turns, a little annoyed, Corrie has to be concise.

CORRIE

Sir, I don't think you want to disable that vehicle at this time, because it could result in a loss of life.

ABBOTT

But I've been told the driver is unarmed, I have to end this thing quick.

NILES (SPEAKER)

I'm tellin' you! I'll start killin' people!

CARL (SPEAKER)

Shoot out the damn tires! Just do it!

CORRIE

(opens a file)

Captain, I think we're misreading the situation, this is a crime scene report for an armed robbery in Century City where eye witnesses mention two names, NILES and MAC...

Abbott scans the pages Corrie offers.

CORRIE

...I think it's very possible that these two perps got on that bus, took hostages, and THEY DO HAVE GUNS.

INT MTA SEDAN -- DAY -- CARL

screams at the LAPD escort as he is blasted by wind.

CARL

BLOW OUT THE DAMN TIRES! DO IT!

MEGAPHONE

PEPPER MARTIN, STOP IMMEDIATELY OR WE
ARE GOING TO DISABLE THIS BUS!

EXT LAPD SQUAD CAR -- DAY -- CLOSE ON A RIFLE BARREL

as an Officer takes aim from the moving car.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- NILES

aims the Grizzly WynMag right at Sadie's head, then
Kenya's, then Keith's, gasps and moans follow.

NILES

Who's gonna be the first to die, huhn?

At the front of the bus, Pepper makes a decision, grabs the
microphone from its position, raises it with a forceful,

PEPPER

This is Pepper Martin, there are people
in great danger, don't disable the bus!

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- DAY -- CLOSE ON CORRIE

who points at the speaker with,

CORRIE

Did you hear that? That's my FATHER!
He's not the one you're after!

PEPPER (SPEAKER)

I repeat, if anyone can hear me, do not
disable this bus!

Abbott comes to a realization, reaches for the microphone.

ABBOTT

HOLD YOUR FIRE!

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- NILES

touches Sadie's forehead with the gun barrel.

SADIE

Please, dear God, help me...

At the front of the bus, Curtis stares in the rear-view-mirror too long, his eyes wander back down to the road and,

CURTIS

SHIT!

EXT WASHINGTON BLVD -- DAY -- THE NUMBER FOUR

jumps a curb, clips a fire hydrant, water plumes and the bus veers back on course, right in the path of Carl's MTA sedan as it coughs along.

INT MTA SEDAN -- DAY -- CLOSE ON CARL

his eyes widen, what he sees,

Through the windshield the Number Four, big as a house, rumbles right in front of him, eats the front of his car.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- EUGENE

peers out the back window as the MTA sedan KERKRASH! veers into a parked car.

EUGENE

One for the Number Four, cavemen zip!

Baron still holds his hands on Henry's shoulder, Henry's got his eyes closed now and breathes a little easier.

Down the aisle, Niles peers out the window, his Grizzly WynMag still aimed at Sadie's head as,

At the front of the bus, Pepper points with exhausted relief.

PEPPER

LOOK! They're pulling back! They're letting us go!

Mac snatches the microphone out of Pepper's hands with,

MAC

Nobody talks on this thing unless I say so, got it?

Pepper is amazed, he did the right thing, again, and somebody's yelling at him for it, again.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- DAY -- ABBOTT

and the others are astonished, turn to Corrie who breathes a sigh of relief, but worry follows.

ABBOTT

You were right! There are men with guns on that bus!

(to the room)

Tell two cars to move ahead of the bus and bust through all traffic lights, these guys sound desperate.

(to Corrie)

I'm sorry... about your father.

CORRIE

Sir, I'm a police officer, anyone's life would be equally important--

ABBOTT

--I hear you, officer, that's what you have to say, but I know how you FEEL.

Abbott tugs at sheets of paper which Corrie clutches in worried fists without knowing it, she lets them go.

EXT WASHINGTON BLVD -- DUSK -- CARL EVANS

stands next to his COMPLETELY DEMOLISHED MTA SEDAN as HARVEY KRAUSE, a wound up news reporter, shoves a microphone in his face.

CARL

I was on the bus when he snapped, I realized a situation was developing, and I risked my life to try and save those people, but Pepper Martin is not a rational human being...

EXT AERIAL OF LOS ANGELES -- DUSK -- STREETS

radiate from a cluster of freeways as a 20 : 1 POWER ZOOM moves down, down, down, closer, closer, closer to an MTA BUS with the numbers 8324-9 on the roof, it barrels along a surface street, lead by TWO LAPD SQUAD CARS and followed by FIVE LAPD SQUAD CARS, lights flash, sirens scream.

STROUD (O.S.)

This is Leslie Anne Stroud for MetroNews Television, and once again a tragedy is unfolding before our very eyes in the form of a hostage situation involving an MTA bus full of holiday passengers...

INT METRONEWS HELICOPTER -- DUSK -- LESLIE ANNE STROUD

wears a headset, peers at the twinkling lights of the city.

STROUD

...at this point in time police and MTA officials remain very tight-lipped about names of victims or possible perpetrators, but MetroNews will let you know the moment any information is made available to us, this is Leslie Anne Stroud reporting live, in the air above Los Angeles.

Leslie Anne starts to pull off her headset when,

HELICOPTER PILOT

Leslie, you've got a call from Harvey Krause.

STROUD

Patch it through.

KRAUSE (RADIO)

Leslie...?

EXT WASHINGTON BLVD -- DUSK -- METRONEWSVAN -- KRAUSE

holds a CELLULAR PHONE as Carl Evans gesticulates wildly, gives an interview to another NEWS TEAM.

KRAUSE

...the bus driver's name is Pepper Martin, and I'm rolling to his house right now.

STROUD (PHONE)

That's great, Harvey, what a scoop!

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- TWO LAPD SQUAD CARS

pull in front of the Number Four, sirens blare as they clear the way for the big bus while,

Two more LAPD SQUAD CARS pull alongside the bus as it rolls through an intersection.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- DAY -- CLOSE ON THE PASSENGERS

The impact of their situation is reflected in their faces. Sadie clutches Art's head in her lap, Kenya and L'll-2-M try to comfort each other, Ruben stares out the window, Keith just wants wake up from this nightmare, and Niles laughs long with,

NILES

It's such a shame, the streets of this city just ain't safe anymore.

Across the aisle, Sadie gently strokes Art's head, he's still delirious from Niles' blow, not sure who listens.

ART

Why does everybody think holidays are so great? I mean, they're really screwy. Couples breakin' up on Valentine's day, people committin' suicide on Christmas, relatives forcin' themselves on each other at Thanksgivin', I read somewhere that more kids run away on their birthdays than any other day of the year, and look what's happenin' to us, a bunch of hostages on the 4th of July.

Niles leans close to Sadie and Art, the passing street lights make an eerie sight on his livid face.

NILES

I love the 4th of fuckin' July! It means I can get away with as much freedom as I want, the outlaw rules, that's the REAL America, Billy the Kid, Bonnie and Clyde, Thelma and Louise, fuck, I should be able to get away with murder too...!

(paces)

...but none of you know nothin' about it, the rules all you civilized people play by, I don't play by those rules! I control where my life's goin'! Not like you people! 'CAUSE YOU'RE ALL COWARDS!

Niles plops into the seat across from Kenya, who turns away, faces L'll-2-Much.

NILES

So, maybe we're gonna get to know each other after all, eh, brown sugar?

At the back of the bus, Eugene and Baron share a look as Henry rests as best he can while,

At the front of the bus, Curtis stares in the rear-view-mirror, Kenya looks up at him, sadness and fear on her face, Curtis gives her a bright smile, and a spark of hope flickers for a moment in Kenya.

MAC (O.S.)

What the hell is this?

Pepper blanches white because Mac has his hand in Pepper's leather bag, but he comes out with Curtis' SONY WATCHMAN, clicks it on, and a thin, speaker voice fills the bus with

NEWS REPORTER (T.V.)

...and I have to tell you, from up here it looks downright eerie, this big city bus, being escorted by dozens of police cars, through city traffic that parts like the Red Sea before Moses.

MAC

Hey, Niles, we're on television.

Several seats back, Keith speaks softly into a MICRO-CASSETTE TAPE RECORDER, recites from memory.

KEITH

...all of my class B, General Motors stock should go into a trust, the condo on Kauai should go to my executive secretary, the house in Vail should go to my nephew, Greg Ashton--

RUBEN

--you sure can't take it with you. Hey, it must be lonely at the top, but I'll bet it's real quiet up there.

KEITH

(snaps off recorder)
Will you mind your own business? I really don't want to talk to you.

RUBEN

Well, you haven't got much choice, do you, fella.

Keith stands, he wants to move to another seat.

NILES

Sit down, rich kid! NOW!

From across the aisle, Niles proudly snaps the Rolex watch around his wrist and,

Keith plops back into his seat, he shivers because his torn shirt leaves him exposed, Ruben notices, sifts through his RAG BAG, comes out with a T-SHIRT and hands it to,

Keith who hesitates, then nods thanks and puts it on, the words **VIVA LA RAZA** are emblazoned across the front, this breaks the ice a little, and Keith turns with a whisper,

KEITH

I truly believe that if they're going to kill anybody, they shouldn't kill me, those other people have got nothing to lose, I've got a business, a house, a career, a future, what kind of future have they got?

RUBEN

The same future you do, only you don't know it. Listen, everybody's got to live their own life and die their own death, nobody can do that for you. Unless you think you can pay somebody to die for you.

KEITH

I hadn't really considered that.

At the front of the bus, Curtis downshifts, passes a car stopped by police sirens, as Pepper and Mac sit in a daze from all the excitement.

CURTIS

Can I ask you a question? And you have to let me ask it without getting mad.

MAC

That's stupid, I'm not a mind reader.

Pepper glances at Curtis, what's he up to?

CURTIS

You really gonna let your partner take you down with him? Because that's they way it's gonna happen.

MAC

What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

CURTIS

You know what it means, I know people, and you're no bad guy, I can talk to you, but your... partner, well he's a whole other ball of wax.

MAC

The guy would probably enjoy killing everybody on this bus, but that may be the best thing I got going for me right now.

Curtis stares in the rear-view-mirror, glances at Pepper who gets increasingly nervous with all this.

CURTIS

Let us help you take his gun away.

PEPPER

Curtis, shut up!

EXT VERMONT AVENUE -- NIGHT -- AN ND SEDAN

pulls up with the caravan of LAPD Squad Cars, in the backseat, a DISH ANTENNA held by an FBI AGENT sticks out the window and FILTERED VOICES begin to resolve.

MAC (FILTERED)

You... say... like that... again and I'll... Niles!

PEPPER (FILTERED)

The kid... doesn't know what... talking about... don't listen... him.

CURTIS (FILTERED)

Okay... sorry....didn't mean it.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- NIGHT -- AN FBI AGENT

pushes headphones against his ears, nods to a TYPIST who also wears headphones and hits keys which record the conversation as it happens, paper scrolls out of a printer at a table where Corrie sits and scans the pages.

CLOSE ON the words, OKAY... SORRY....DIDN'T MEAN IT.

A UNIFORMED OFFICER picks up freshly printed DATA SHEETS, passes them out to Captain Abbott and new arrivals, FBI Agent FREDERICK JOSEPHSON, Fire Captain RICHARD DONNELLY, CHP Captain FREDERICK LEWIS, SWAT Captain CLAY RODGERS, and Deputy Mayor STAN WALTERS, Abbott reads from a rap sheet.

ABBOTT

...Niles Clemente, killed his father, claimed self-defense for years of sexual molestation, committed to California Youth Authority for five years, ten years in San Quentin for armed robbery and aggravated assault. Whew!

JOSEPHSON

He's the one I'm concerned about, this McIntyre character is just a small time hood, he isn't the problem.

RODGERS

What do we do if they start killing hostages?

WALTERS

I just want to go on record here that the mayor's first priority is to exercise the utmost care in protecting the lives of all hostages.

JOSEPHSON

That's the Bureau's position also.

ABBOTT

I hear you loud and clear, but none of us can control what happens on that bus.

Corrie looks up for a moment at the group, then plows back into her task.

INT. MARTIN HOUSE -- NIGHT -- KITCHEN -- JENNY

comes in from the backyard, as SEVERAL NEIGHBORS stand around a smoking barbecue, she hears a KNOCK on the door.

JENNY

Pepper? Is that you...?

In the entryway, the KNOCK persists as Jenny steps to the front door, parts a curtain, and a look of confusion clouds her face, she opens the door revealing

NEWSMEN, CAMERAS, BLINDING LIGHTS, a cacophony of voices.

NEWS REPORTERS

Jenny Martin, I just wanted to ask you...? Jenny Martin, a few questions about your husband...? Jenny Martin, do you think he's afraid...? Jenny Martin, what was the last thing he said to you when he left for work this morning?

INT. THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- CLOSE ON THE SONY WATCHMAN

as Niles' nicotine-stained fingers channel hop,

SONY WATCHMAN SCREEN

CLICK! There is no way of telling how many hostages are... CLICK! The bus was commandeered shortly after four o'clock... CLICK! Doctor, do you think the kidnappers have a political agenda...? CLICK! This is not like Waco, or Attica for that matter, it's a public place that has been taken over...CLICK!

Niles stares at the little TV, lights a cigarette.

KRAUSE (T.V.)

The bus driver's home is located in an unassuming, suburban area of unincorporated Torrance, Pepper Martin has been a driver for the MTA for over twenty-three years...

Niles stands and walks up the aisle to where Pepper, Curtis and Mac sit, holds out the Watchman for Pepper to see.

NILES

Check it out, family man...

(then)

...they should be paying us, we're the real stars of this show, the TV stations get entertainment, programming, all for free, because of what we're doin' right now, fuck, they're just crooks like everybody else...

Niles hands the Watchman to Mac and turns with,

NILES

...anybody here an attorney? I want to negotiate the book and TV rights to my story, HA, HA, HA!

Niles bends down close to Kenya who squirms and clutches L'll-2-Much.

NILES

Maybe I should do something to make all this REAL exciting! HA, HA, HA!

At the front of the bus, Curtis stares in the rear-view-mirror, he can't take much more of this.

CURTIS

Stay the fuck away from her!

KRAUSE (T.V.)

...complicating matters for the authorities is the potential for massive confusion on many of our city's streets when the festivities and fireworks at most of the major parks in the metropolitan area conclude around 10 PM.

MAC

(gets an idea)

Niles! We need to talk!

(to Curtis)

I'm keeping an eye on you guys, so just keep the bus moving.

Mac walks down the aisle, sits in a seat facing Niles, lowers his voice with,

MAC

I think I should call Lydia...

Niles' mind races, what's the plan here?

MAC

...I can tell her to meet us somewhere, some noisy place on the 4th of July where we can disappear real easy.

NILES

That's a good idea, call that bitch who got us into this mess.

MAC

But you got to work with me, man, you got to stay cool here, don't fight me.

NILES

Hey, Mac, get us outta this, and I just might be your friend for life.

Mac isn't sure if he likes that idea, he stands, pulls out Keith's cellular, dials a number.

MAC

Lydia? Mac here...

At the front of the bus, Pepper glances over his shoulder, leans close to Curtis with a loud whisper,

PEPPER

You almost blew it back there with that stupid idea!

CURTIS

Hey, I just thought if I had a gun, we could do something.

Pepper glances at his leather bag.

PEPPER

If you had a gun, you'd get yourself killed. I say, don't do anything crazy, and nothing crazy is going to happen.

CURTIS

That's you, Pepper, don't do nothin', but you don't do nothin', and you'll end up nothin'.

PEPPER

Listen, kid, people are in danger here.
This is real, this is reality. So just
shut up and think about somebody else
for once in your life!

Curtis grabs Pepper's shirt, pulls him close as he drives.

CURTIS

Damnit, Pepper, that's what I'm saying!

PEPPER

What! Tell me...

CURTIS

When you get on a roller coaster, you
don't expect to DIE, in fact it's just
the opposite, you got on to get SCARED,
because it makes you feel ALIVE...!

Pepper listens closely to what Curtis says.

CURTIS

...and I'm real scared right now, which
means I'm alive, and I gotta DO
SOMETHIN' to stay that way, understand?
I don't want to die, man.

PEPPER

I understand, young man.

Pepper rubs Curtis shoulders, eases his anxiety, there is a
bond between these two men that didn't exist at the
beginning of the day, Curtis nods at the little CERAMIC BUS
on the dashboard.

CURTIS

What's your daughter's name, Pepper?

PEPPER

Corrie, and to tell you the truth, if I
had known what was going to happen
today, I would have asked my daughter to
forgive me.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- NIGHT -- THE TYPIST

hits the keys, the paper scrolls out of the printer and
Corrie scans piles of transcript, she pauses when she sees

Close on the typed phrase, I WOULD HAVE ASKED MY DAUGHTER
TO FORGIVE ME.

Corrie stifles a sob as the Typist looks up with,

TYPIST

Is something wrong, officer?

Corrie shakes her head, can't answer, it's too painful.

ABBOTT

...right now the bus is on a track toward downtown, but I don't know how long that will be maintained, Captain Lewis, what can you give me?

LEWIS

I've got twenty units at various points on the three freeway systems that border the area, we can roll to any given point within ten minutes.

JOSEPHSON

What if we have to close on-ramps?

ABBOTT

LAPD and CHP will co-ordinate with CalTrans on that, right, John?

HARRISON

I can close them all if you want, I just won't guarantee what's going to happen after the parks are done with their fireworks shows...

The Men heave a collective sigh of frustration.

EXT VERMONT AVENUE -- NIGHT -- A TELEPHONE CREW

has a VAN parked near an open manhole. A FLAG MAN waves traffic by as a CABLE MAN yanks cable from the manhole. A ROARING NOISE makes the Flag Man turn, what he sees,

Far off, RED, WHITE AND BLUE FLASHING LIGHTS, lots of exhaust and vehicles, and it's all coming their way.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- CURTIS

leans forward in his seat, taps Pepper's knee with,

CURTIS

There's somethin' in the middle of the street.

Mac and Niles join Pepper and Curtis with,

MAC

Just slow down a little, we don't want to get stuck.

NILES

Fuck no! What if it's a trap? Don't slow down!

CURTIS

I can't do both things at once.

NILES

JUST KEEP GOING!

EXT VERMONT AVENUE -- NIGHT -- AN LAPD SQUAD CAR

roars toward the Van, slows, flashes its lights in warning, whoops its siren.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- NIGHT -- ABBOTT

leans close to a radio as Corrie hovers nearby.

ABBOTT

Get that goddamn vehicle out of the way!

EXT VERMONT AVENUE -- NIGHT -- THE LAPD SQUAD CAR

rams into the Van, pushes it off the street and onto the sidewalk as,

The Flag Man and the Cable Man stand there, slack-jawed, as in the street in front of them,

TWO LAPD SQUAD cars roar past, followed by the MTA BUS, then ONE SQUAD CAR AFTER ANOTHER, five, ten, fifteen, twenty, the line seems endless, then all is silence.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- EUGENE

peers out the back of the bus at the receding wreck with,

EUGENE

Number Four, two, cavemen still zip!

At the front of the bus, Curtis breathes a sigh of relief as Niles shoves Mac with,

NILES

That was a trap! They're fuckin' with us, man!

MAC

How could they be, they don't even know what we're doing here?

Niles leans forward, snatches the radio and keys it with

NILES

I know you can hear what I'm sayin', so
back the fuck off! No more tricks! Or
we start throwin' dead hostages off this
bus!

Niles tosses the microphone on the dash, draws his Grizzly
WynMag and BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! the radio is blown apart.

Pepper makes the mistake of trying to be light with,

PEPPER

I just had that thing fixed.

WHACK! Niles hits Pepper in the face with his gun, he
holds onto the dashboard, tries not to fall down as Mac
grabs Niles before he can strike again.

MAC

Niles, he's trying to help us!

NILES

And you're a fuckin' wimp, man!

(to Curtis)

Get us up on the freeway, no more of
this street shit, too much can go wrong.

Curtis glances at Pepper to see if he is okay.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- NIGHT -- CHAOS

was created by the gunfire, the room buzzes with crosstalk.

ABBOTT

Our single, most important priority is
to keep that bus rolling, Fred?

LEWIS

If they stay on the 710, there's only
about ten miles of freeway left, and
that could make our decision for us.

HARRISON

He's right, if they don't take the 91
turnoff, there's nowhere to go, I've got
a new interchange under construction.

ABBOTT

When will the bus run out of gas?

ASSISTANT

At forty miles an hour, they've got
approximately one hour left.

Abbott looks at all the men, caught up in an extra-ordinary situation, he realizes he has to make the call.

ABBOTT

All right, mobilize a crash site down there at the end of the 710, Russ, order the lead units to close to within fifty feet, and I want all officers in the field issued photos of the perps, let's try to avoid any friendly fire, Clay, a word please...?

Across the room, Corrie stares at the piles of paper, she is exhausted, eyes shot, but she tenses when she sees,

Close on sentences that rush by, stopping at the line,
 LYDIA, MAC HERE...? (REST OF CONVERSATION UNINTELLIGIBLE)

Corrie remembers the name, the place, she's onto something and walks over to,

THE CALTRANS MAP, it dominates one end of the room, Corrie runs her finger in reverse along the passage of the Number Four, stops at Century City, she scans the room and spots,

Captain Abbott, who listens to SWAT Captain Clay Rodgers.

RODGERS

...I'll wait for your word, Jeff, I can only order my men to fire if I've got command power from you.

CORRIE

Captain Abbott, a word please...?

Abbott's tense features soften when he sees Corrie.

CORRIE

Sir, I think an individual mentioned by one of the kidnappers could be linked to that crime committed along the bus route earlier today.

ABBOTT

What are you getting at?

CORRIE

It's possible the kidnappers could have an accomplice, off the bus, who they're in communication with.

ABBOTT

What, you think they could have a cellular on the bus, or a CB?

CORRIE

Yes, sir.

ABBOTT

All right, get Lieutenant Riley to
assign you two units, check it out.

Corrie is gone without another word.

EXT AERIAL OF LOS ANGELES -- NIGHT -- A POLICE HELICOPTER
with its SPOTLIGHT ON ghosts the Number Four as a long line
of police cars, lights flashing, follow.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- BARON AND EUGENE

tear strips of cloth off their shirts, pack Henry's wound
with them.

BARON

You still thinkin' about bein' a
gangster, Gee?

EUGENE

(turns his cap)
I'm thinkin' about livin' past tonight.

In the middle of the bus, L'll-2-Much turns to Kenya and
brushes the hair out of her friend's sad face with,

L'LL-2-MUCH

Kenya, if anything happens to us, I just
want you to know I'm real sorry, girl.

KENYA

What are you talking about?

L'LL-2-MUCH

I was jealous, of you and Curtis, you
were so happy, and I thought I was gonna
lose you.

Kenya glances toward the front of the bus and Curtis.

KENYA

You were right, I was happy, really
happy...

L'LL-2-MUCH

Oh, shit, I'm sorry, do you forgive me?

KENYA

Of course, I could never be mad at you.

Kenya hugs L'll-2-Much, while in the seat behind Keith shifts, nervous and impatient, he glances at Ruben.

KEITH

This is insane, that I could die like this, I mean this is really crazy.

RUBEN

Yeah, well the dudes on this bus ain't our only problem. Man, this is LA. Just look for the gun barrels at every underpass we drive by, the cops in this town have very itchy trigger fingers.

The Passengers sneak looks up out windows, what they see,

The Police Helicopter's SPOTLIGHT is blocked briefly by the dark buttress of a cement overpass, and SILHOUETTES OF SWAT SNIPERS are, in fact, caught in the backlight.

SADIE

What if he's right, Art, we're just little people, nobody's going to care about us.

ART

I'm just sorry that you couldn't meet my son, Sadie.

Things clear in Art's eyes, he puts his hand in Sadie's.

SADIE

Bless your heart, are you hungry?

Sadie opens her grocery bag, brings out POTATO CHIPS, notices a BOTTLE OF OVEN CLEANER in the bottom of the bag.

KEITH

But the police have got to have a plan, right? I mean, they're experts in these kinds of situations.

RUBEN

All I know is that once these dudes kill one of us, they've crossed the line, and it becomes too dangerous for anybody to be reasonable anymore.

Across the aisle, Niles lights a cigarette off a butt with.

NILES

Shut up.

KEITH

Yeah, shut up, don't get him madder.

Ruben leans past Keith with,

RUBEN

Hey, you know what a WET HIT is, man?
It's when the victim's blood gets on the
killer, but these SWAT guys don't like
wet hits, it's a video game for them,
you're just this electronic outline, and
you hear the shot AFTER you been hit.

NILES

Didn't you hear me? I said shut up!

KEITH

Don't listen to him, he's just a bum,
what's he got to lose?

(to Ruben)

He's right, shut up, he's going to hurt
you.

Ruben points to an ad above the windows for ROSE HILLS
FUNERAL PARK.

RUBEN

Hey, how convenient, you can do your
shopping right onboard the bus.

Niles aims the Grizzly WynMag at Ruben, when suddenly BOOM!
a firework goes off nearby, Niles cringes, Ruben notices.

RUBEN

That could have been a cherry bomb, but
then it could have been a sniper, in
fact they could be shooting at us right
now and we don't even know it.

Niles pulls back the hammer on the Grizzly WynMag and BOOM!

At the front of the bus, Pepper and Mac turn as Curtis
stares in the rear-view-mirror while,

Down the aisle, as the smoke clears, the hole in the window
right next to Ruben's head shows how close the bullet came.

RUBEN

I ain't afraid to die, are you?

IN NILES' HEAD

CRAZY! WET HIT! DEAD! DANGEROUS!
HEAVEN! SWAT! VICTIM'S BLOOD!

Close on Niles, the paranoid dyslexia rises up behind his
eyes, the words a jumble that mean something only to him
he waves the Grizzly WynMag at the Passengers with,

NILES

All of you better just stop sayin' that
shit to me!

At the front of the bus, Pepper rubs the bloody spot on his
forehead and glances at Curtis who turns to Mac with,

CURTIS

You're losin' him, man. We got to do
something.

MAC

Shut up! Don't talk to me about that!

Down the aisle, L'll-2-Much has heard enough.

L'LL-2-MUCH

Man, why don't you take a vacation from
yourself or somethin', I'm gettin' real
tired of your shit.

KENYA

Shut up, girl!

NILES

What was that? You got somethin' to say
to me, say it to my face.

Niles grabs Kenya's wrist, pulls her out of her seat with,

NILES

Come here, brown sugar, I want to get
close to you! You like me? Huhn? You
wanna dance with the devil tonight?

KENYA

Let me go!

Kenya lifts her knee hard and catches Niles right in the
crotch.

NILES

OUCH! You bitch! You like to fight,
hunh? Well, I like a fighter!

Niles laughs, licks Kenya's neck, and she moans with
revulsion as L'll-2-Much reaches out to help and SMACK!
Niles hits her across the face.

At the front of the bus, Curtis stands but keeps driving:
the bus, he wants to run down the aisle, a man torn.

CURTIS

C'mon, man, you gotta stop him!

MAC

I can't!

Kenya's screams get louder, Curtis tries to get out of his seat, and the bus swerves.

MAC

Hey, watch it...! Sit down!

PEPPER

Easy, you're going to crash this thing!

CURTIS

Pepper, drive the bus, man!

Back down the aisle, Niles grabs Kenya's face, kisses her full on the mouth, she moans but can't break free as L'll-2-Much tries to pry Niles' fingers off Kenya's back.

L'LL-2-MUCH

Let go of her! LET GO!

CLOSE ON CURTIS' FACE, he can't take it anymore.

CLOSE ON CURTIS' FOOT, it stomps on the brake pedal and,

The bus surges into a stop, Niles falls on top of Kenya and L'll-2-Much, Art grabs Sadie and covers her head, Keith and Ruben are thrown violently forward, and Eugene, Baron and Henry brace themselves in the back seat as,

At the front of the bus, Mac flies into the windshield, hits his head, sprawls to the floor as Pepper is tossed on a hand rail, clutches ribs, falls into the door well.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- NIGHT -- A UNIFORMED OFFICER

turns from a RADIO as Abbott stares at the bus location on the CalTrans map.

OFFICER

Lead units report a problem.

ABBOT

Clay, have we got any men at the M. L. King overpass?

RODGERS

Five, they just got there.

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- THE NUMBER FOUR

goes into a skid, tires smoke and screech, then KERKRASH! the bus hits the side of an underpass, grinds along as sparks fly, finally it veers back to the middle of the freeway and comes to a full stop while,

Fifty yards back the pursuing line of LAPD SQUAD CARS and CHP CRUISERS brake randomly, OFFICERS jump out, draw their weapons, aim.

On the overpass, FIVE SWAT SNIPERS crouch, hats reversed, high-powered rifles with NIGHT VISION SCOPES aimed at,

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- THE TANGLE OF BODIES

lies in the aisle as Curtis screams and claws his way to Niles, pounds him with his fists, they roll around like wild animals, grunt and groan as Kenya, L'll-2-Much, Sadie and Art grapple to get out of the way.

At the back of the bus, the EMERGENCY DOOR pops open, and Baron almost falls out.

BARON

Gee, man, lookit this!

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- AT THE EMERGENCY DOOR -- BARON

jumps to the pavement, stumbles, is instantly hit with SPOTLIGHTS, he holds up his hands, blinded as,

INT SWAT SNIPER SCOPE -- NIGHT -- HI-TECH CROSSHAIRS

lock on Baron's head, he could be dead in a split second.

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- THE POLICE LINE -- A CHP OFFICER

steps forward, glances at FAXED PHOTOS OF NILES AND MAC, talks into his radio with,

CAPTAIN

Hold your fire, it's a hostage!

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- MAC

steps up over the fighting Niles and Curtis, pulls his gun.

MAC

Stop it, both of you!

Suddenly Sadie tosses the BOTTLE OF OVEN CLEANER right in Mac's face, he screams and claws at his eyes.

At the front of the bus, Pepper tries to stand, but his ribs are horribly bruised, he coughs and gasps for air as,

On the floor, Curtis wails away at Niles who rummages around in the darkness, grunts and comes up with his Grizzly WynMag, swings it around.

KENYA
LOOK OUT, CURTIS!

Curtis hits Niles' arm and BOOM! a shot flies wide.

L'll-2-Much screams on the floor, Sadie makes a cross over her chest as Art covers her head with his arms, while Keith and Ruben, badly cut and bruised, duck down.

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- AT THE EMERGENCY DOOR -- BARON
gently helps Henry down out of the bus, Eugene hops out.

VOICE (O.S.)
Run for it! This way!

Baron and Eugene form a sling with their arms, carry Henry toward the police line.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- CURTIS AND NILES

struggle with the Grizzly WynMag, it passes between them, their eyes meet, suddenly Niles punches Curtis in the face, sends him flying backwards, gets off another shot BOOM!

WHAP! The bullet chews up the seat back right over Curtis' left shoulder, he ducks out of the way and BOOM! WHAP! another bullet hits where his head just was.

Curtis is on his feet, dives toward the back of the bus as, BOOM! he almost got hit that time, BOOM! he barely stays ahead of the deadly shots.

On the floor, Niles aims carefully, about to squeeze off a fatal round when Kenya kicks out, knocks his aim off and BOOM! the shot goes through the roof.

At the backdoor, Curtis looks at Kenya, their eyes meet, then he leaps through the open Emergency Door as BOOM! another shot almost kills him.

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- AT THE EMERGENCY DOOR -- CURTIS
lands on the pavement, stands, is blinded by spotlights.

INT SWAT SNIPER SCOPE -- NIGHT -- HI-TECH CROSSHAIRS
lock in on Curtis' head.

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- A LINE OF POLICE OFFICERS yell as Curtis crouches, confused.

OFFICERS (O.S.)
Come on! Run for it! Over here!

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- PEPPER

struggles to the driver's seat, takes the keys out of the ignition, winds up to throw them out the window when,

CLOSE ON A HAND as it grabs Pepper's hand, closes around it, and the snub-nosed .38 comes up with,

MAC (O.S.)
You're... the new driver.

Pepper glances up, what he sees makes him shudder, it's Mac, and his eyes are burned horribly, face red and swollen, maybe he can see, maybe he can't.

Back down the aisle, Niles snarls as he grabs Kenya by the hair, yanks her to her feet, holds the Grizzly WynMag to her head, turns this way and that as SPOTLIGHTS shine through the windows.

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- AT THE EMERGENCY DOOR -- CURTIS sees the exhaust smoke as the Number Four moves forward, he hears Kenya scream, looks at the safety of the police line.

OFFICERS (O.S.)
C'mon! You can make it! Get out of there!

Curtis breaks into a run, the Number Four gains speed, Curtis runs harder, leaps onto the back bumper just before the bus gets going too fast to catch.

INT ROAD ADVENTURES -- NIGHT -- LYDIA

sits at a desk and takes a clipboard from a SALESMAN in the GLASS TRAILER of the car rental company.

LYDIA
Why is this taking so long? Is there a problem with my driver's license?

SALEMAN
No, no we just ran a DMV check, and you're just fine.

INT LAPD SQUAD CAR -- NIGHT -- CORRIE

rolls to a stop across the street, as her radio goes crazy.

CHP OFFICER (RADIO)

This is three-William-fourteen, and it looks like someone is riding on the outside of the vehicle, over.

POLICE DISPATCHER (RADIO)

I copy that, is there an ambulance in your vicinity?

PARAMEDIC (RADIO)

We are rolling with the pursuit group, over.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- NIGHT -- ABBOTT

talks on a phone as the other Men stare at the BLINKING LIGHT on the CalTrans map, it is clearly headed for the end of a freeway system.

ABBOTT

...on the back of the bus? Who do they think it is?

JOSEPHSON

We really don't have any choice, we set up a barricade, narrow down their options, and if we have to we move in.

CORLEY

But my men are saying that it's hard to tell who's who, and I don't want the wrong individual being shot on my watch.

LEWIS

And what if the perps find out they've run out of road? They're liable to do something drastic.

JOSEPHSON

Well, we are dealing with cop killers here, there's no guarantee they wouldn't kill even if they weren't in a bind.

INT METRONEWS HELICOPTER -- NIGHT -- LESLIE ANNE STROUT

peers down at the snaking freeway as the lights of the rush by and what she sees makes her gasp.

STROUD

As unbelievable as it appears to all of us, you viewers out there are seeing what I'm seeing, there is a man on top of the bus! That's right! My, God, how can that be possible?

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- AERIAL POV -- CURTIS

hangs onto the roof of the bus as a ferocious blast of wind tears at his cloths, and he tries to improve his hold.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- MAC'S FACE

is a mess, he stands behind the driver's seat, his hand on Pepper's shoulder like a blind man with his seeing eye dog.

Down the aisle, the Passengers groan back into their seats, as Niles stands in their midst, watches the Sony Watchman.

STROUD (T.V.)

I can't understand why he's up there, can you, Joe?

HELICOPTER PILOT (T.V.)

You've got me, Leslie, it looks like he's just trying to hold on.

Niles grins, looks up at the ceiling of the bus, raises the Grizzly WynMag and BOOM! the Passengers scream and crouch down as Niles takes a step and BOOM!

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- ON THE ROOF -- CURTIS

jerks back when KRONK! a piece of metal shreds near his right hand, a huge hole blown out.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- MAC

turns around, but he can't see much.

MAC

Niles? What's happening back there?

NILES

That other fuckin' driver is on the roof!

Down the aisle, Kenya bows her head, she can't bear to watch as Niles takes another step, aims and BOOM!

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- ON THE ROOF -- KRONK!

Curtis arches his back as the next bullet blows through near his waist, that was really close.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- MAC

leans past Pepper, yanks the wheel, swerves the bus.

PEPPER

Hey, fuck you! Let go!

Mac yanks the wheel again, and the bus swerves again.

PEPPER

Damnit, man, you're going to flip us!

Pepper grabs Mac's hand, they struggle for a moment, then Pepper shoves Mac backwards, takes control of the bus.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- ON THE ROOF -- CURTIS

holds on for dear life as BOOM! KRONK! another hole rips through the roof, directly between Curtis' spread legs very near his crotch, he peers back, gulps, rolls to one side.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- NILES

hears a thumping noise against metal, gauges where it comes from with the barrel of his Grizzly WynMag and BOOM! BOOM!

MAC (O.S.)

Is he still on?!

Kenya stares at the ceiling, the only sound is the rumble of the damaged bus transmission, like a heartbeat, her heart beat, she wonders if Curtis is still alive.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- THE ROOF -- CURTIS

clings to the far edge of the roof, the last two ragged bullet holes are right next to his head, as a helicopter SPOTLIGHT sweeps past.

EXT CRENSHAW OVERPASS -- NIGHT -- THREE SWAT TEAM MEMBERS

run from one side of the overpass to the other, sight through night scopes, as the Number Four rattles by below, and a HELICOPTER roars by only yards overhead, the rotor wash whips up everything that's not tied down.

SWAT OFFICER (RADIO)

We've got a news chopper out here that's getting too close...

INT CHP CRUISER -- NIGHT -- A CHP OFFICER

twist his spotlight around, hits the Helicopter above with the light and,

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- NILES

looks down at the screen, VIDEO FEEDBACK from the spotlight obliterates the image, he stares at the roof, there's only the beating transmission, is anybody there?

INT LAPD SQUAD CAR -- NIGHT -- POV THROUGH A WINDSHIELD

as a 4 X 4 RANGE ROVER weaves through traffic, Corrie is behind the wheel of her Squad Car, she turns a sharp left, follows the Range Rover, she is on a mission.

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- THE NUMBER FOUR

rumbles down the freeway, a headlight winks on and off, metal dangles and sparks, several flat tires smoke, but through it all the smashed grill work sports a SMILE.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- PEPPER

glances at Mac, even now he feels embarrassed.

PEPPER

I'm sorry, but just keep your hands off the wheel, I don't like other people driving my bus, it's a personal thing.

NILES (O.S.)

I don't know if that dude is still up there or not. What the fuck...?

As Niles arrives up the aisle, he sees the horrible mess that is Mac's face, leans in close and holds his hand up.

NILES

You see okay?

MAC

Good enough.

What Mac sees is a BLURRY TRIPLE IMAGE of Niles.

NILES

Way I figure, we're gonna need a head start to get off this fuckin' crate...

Niles glances over his shoulder at the huddled Passengers, he talks to himself but Mac hears.

NILES

...I could kill somebody and throw them off, and it'd be a fifty fifty chance whether the cops'd attack or back off.

NILES (CONT.)

Fuck! This is stupid! I don't even know if that bitch is gonna be there for us!

MAC

She'll be there! We worked it out!

NILES

You worked it out. That's good, Mac, you're a real leader of men.

Mac knows Niles is toying with him, doesn't like it.

MAC

At that city park on Slauson! The one with the fountain, she's gonna rent a car and wait next to the fountain.

(gets an idea)

Listen, man, you should throw out Jimmy. They won't know the difference. Don't kill anybody else, man.

NILES

You're such a fuckin' wimp, you're still tryin' to protect these people.

MAC

C'mon, man, it's just a body, right?

Niles thinks about this, it's not as exciting for him.

NILES

Maybe. We're comin' up on Slauson, get back up there.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- NIGHT -- A WAR ROOM

is what it feels like as the Men sit, pace, stand, point.

JOSEPHSON

We can't let them off the freeway!

HARRISON

Well, they're going to run out of freeway in three miles!

LEWIS

And all bets are off when they get to that destination!

ABBOTT

Get me the crash site!

EXT CRASH SITE -- NIGHT -- ARCS OF UNFINISHED FREEWAY

loom in the mist as a CONCRETE BARRICADE gets hoisted by a crane from a TRACTOR TRAILER near TWENTY LAPD SQUAD CARS, a SWAT TEAM VAN, FIVE AMBULANCES, THREE FIRE TRUCKS, while Police Officers, Firemen, CalTrans Officials and FBI Agents execute their assigned tasks, at their lead is,

LAPD CAPTAIN JOSEPH HAWKINS who has a walkie-talkie in one hand and a megaphone in the other.

HAWKINS

We're as ready as we can be, Chief, but if that bus doesn't slow down, it's going to look like a war zone out here.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- A FIREWORKS CLUSTER

bursts over the park as LYDIA'S 4 X 4 cruises through the gates to the park, moments later Corrie's Squad Car rumbles along.

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- AERIAL POV -- THE NUMBER FOUR

roars down the freeway, Curtis a tiny shape clinging to the roof, and at each off-ramp a SQUAD CAR with flashing lights is parked behind a WOODEN BARRICADE.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD

a sign announces END OF FREEWAY TWO MILES.

PEPPER

In case you didn't SEE it, that last sign said we're running out of road.

Pepper glances into the rear-view-mirror, where Mac's mangled face is a mask of confusion.

PEPPER

Hey, there's nowhere else to go, we're going to have to stop in about three minutes.

MAC

Just drive! NILES! YOU READY?

At the back of the bus, Niles shoves the Emergency Door open a crack, and in the roar of wind he glares back at

The Passengers, there's Kenya and L'll-2-Much who clute each other, Art lets Sadie rest her head on his shoulder. Keith fumbles with his micro-cassette recorder, Ruben stares, contemptuous.

NILES

So, who's lucky day is it?

At the front of the bus, Mac shoves Pepper with the .38.

MAC

Slauson's soon isn't it? Get ready to pull off.

PEPPER

Are you kidding? They've got the exit blocked.

MAC

Well then, you'll just have to crash through the barricade.

PEPPER

But the turn's too sharp, we'll never make it.

MAC

JUST DO IT!

Mac's scream makes Pepper sit up, he puts the .38 near Pepper's ear, cocks the hammer, and Pepper sets his jaw.

MAC (O.S.)

NILES!

The vacuum created by the wind rushes down the aisle past the huddled Passengers to where Niles kicks the Emergency door all the way open.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- OUTSIDE THE EMERGENCY DOOR
muzzles flashes BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! are followed by screams.

INT CHP CRUISER -- NIGHT -- THE CHP CAPTAIN
leans forward, keys his radio with,

CHP CAPTAIN

There's gunfire on the bus! Over.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- SLOW MOTION -- A BODY

tumbles out the Emergency Door, a rag doll that twists and rolls over and over, coming to rest in a broken heap.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- NIGHT -- CAPTAIN ABBOTT

hovers near a radio as Josephson and Walters pace.

CHP CAPTAIN (RADIO)
Somebody just fell out of the bus!

ABBOTT
All right, back off! EVERYBODY BACK OFF
IMMEDIATELY!

EXT BARRICADE -- NIGHT -- TWO L. A. SHERIFFS DEPUTIES

hear the bus, look out past their car and wooden barricade,
realize the bus veers their way, one keys his radio with,

DEPUTY
This is the Slauson barricade and that
bus is getting off the freeway in our
direction real quick.

EXT FREEWAY -- NIGHT -- BOOTS IN A WASH OF HEADLIGHTS

run up and surround a body, hands reach down and flip it
over, it's JIMMY.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- PEPPER

downshifts, shakes his head, glances at the bus as it
rattles along.

PEPPER
(to self)
We aren't going to make that turn, I
know this bus, and we simply aren't
going to make it.

Mac sits in a seat, braces himself for what he can't see.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- THE ROOF -- CURTIS

peers ahead through the blast of wind, sees what's coming
and snaps his SUSPENDERS under the metal rim of the bus
roof, wraps the other end around his wrists.

CURTIS
Fuckin' suspenders! Now I know why they
require these fuckin' things, in case of
fuckin' emergencies, use the regulation
fuckin' suspenders to tie yourself to
the fuckin' roof of the fuckin' bus!

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- THE PASSENGERS

see what's coming and brace themselves between seats, next
to the walls, anyway they can.

KEITH

This is weird, you're probably the last person I'll ever see alive.

RUBEN

Lucky you.

Ruben hums what sounds like a GREGORIAN CHANT, as Kenya clutches L'll-2-Much with,

KENYA

I do forgive you...

And Art hugs Sadie, who tries not to cry while,

At the back of the bus, in the rush of wind, Niles howls like a primitive animal as,

In the front of the bus, Pepper peers at the on-coming wreck with,

PEPPER

I love this job...

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD

the bus treats the barricade like toothpicks, shoves the Sheriff's Car out of the way like a toy, clips the off-ramp railing, sends pieces of metal and wood flying as,

Pepper wrestles with the steering wheel, tries to keep the bus on the road, it groans and moans from the punishment.

PEPPER

Sorry, baby, forgive me...

Down the aisle, as the Passengers ride it out, the bus trembles and shakes and begins to tilt.

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- THE ROOF -- CURTIS

holds on tight, lowers his head as pieces of railing and metal fly past, hit him, bounce around like space debris.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- PEPPER

leans against the tilt, realizes the bus is flipping, can't hold on any longer and lets go of the steering wheel, it spins violently of its own accord as Mac sits there, unable to see the wild ride he is trapped in the middle of.

EXT OFF-RAMP -- NIGHT -- SLOW MOTION -- THE NUMBER FOUR

busts through the guard rail, ramps off the hillside, leaves the ground, the behemoth flies like an airborne brick, silent, almost graceful, if it could sprout wings and fly away from this mess it would, wind whistles as a FIREWORK EXPLODES majestically overhead, it's inspiring, then gravity takes it's course and,

KERASH! The Number Four lands in a parking lot and keeps right on rolling.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- PEPPER

opens his eyes, stares at the steering wheel, a miracle just happened, but his face tenses, and he reaches out to grab the wheel when he sees,

A PARKING LOT FULL OF CARS is directly in his path.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- THE NUMBER FOUR

plows into a line of parked cars which act like an accordion BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

EXT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- THE ROOF -- CURTIS

is catapulted over the front of the bus and lands on,

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- A CONVERTIBLE CADILLAC

Curtis rips right through the rag top and disappears. Silence.

INT CALTRANS CONTROL -- NIGHT -- ABBOTT

and the others are out the door as the RADIO reports,

CHP CAPTAIN (RADIO)

They threw a dead man from the bus and took the Slauson off-ramp!

INT LAPD SQUAD CAR -- NIGHT -- CORRIE

pulls her car to a stop, her eye on her target as a FIREWORK EXPLODES in the distance.

POLICE DISPATCHER (RADIO)

I've got multiple units heading toward Kenneth Hahn City Park, all units respond and report, over.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- THE NUMBER FOUR -- NILES
kicks open the side door, peers out, leaps to the ground,
drags a screaming Kenya with him, SIRENS are everywhere.

INT CONVERTIBLE CADILLAC -- NIGHT -- CURTIS

rolls over, moans, his left arm is broken, he's badly cut
and bruised, but when he hears Kenya scream, he rises up,
what he sees,

TWO KIDS with sparklers peer into the car, it's surreal,
and behind them, Niles yanks Kenya between parked cars
toward,

BLEACHERS where FIREWORKS burst in the air as a CROWD
"oohs" and "aahs".

EMCEE'S VOICE (AMPLIFIED)
Isn't that wonderful ladies and
gentlemen?

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- CURTIS

groans out of the Cadillac, his arm hangs lifeless at his
side as he peers into the front of the bus, can't see a
thing, beat on the bent metal with,

CURTIS
Pepper! If you can hear me, he's got
Kenya! Tell the cops, man!

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- PEPPER

lies on the floor covered with SHARDS OF SAFETY GLASS, he
wearily rolls over, stands up, turns and looks,

Down the aisle, TWENTY DOLLAR BILLS float like autumn
leaves, smoke hangs in the air, and Mac sits in the rubble
of a seat as the SIRENS get closer.

PEPPER
It's over, man.

MAC
No way, I'm getting off here.

Mac stumbles to his feet, waves the .38 around at,

The TWO, THREE, FOUR PEPPERS that hover in front of him

PEPPER
And how far would you get?

MAC

It doesn't matter. Look, I don't want to kill you, man.

PEPPER

Okay, then don't.

BANG! Mac fires, the bullet hits the dashboard, Pepper cringes.

MAC

COME HERE! NOW!

Pepper glances over at his leather bag, the flap is open, he takes a step and BANG! Mac fires at,

THE THREE PEPPERS which stand there.

MAC

C'mon, man, you were a good hostage, now you just got to do it a little longer.

Pepper starts to laugh, it's a long, healthy laugh which brings some tears to his eyes, but Mac doesn't like it.

MAC

What's so funny?

PEPPER

All my life, people have been saying jump, Pepper, and I answer, how high, but I can't do it anymore.

Mac doesn't understand, suddenly Pepper dives for the leather bag and BANG! BANG! BANG! bullets chew up the seat, the wall, the fan, but miss Pepper as he comes out with the .22 pistol and POW!

The bullet hits Mac in the chest, he falls to the floor, dead.

EXT STAGING AREA -- NIGHT -- CLOSE ON A TUBE -- FOONK!

sparks trail after the airborne rocket as FIREMEN dressed in overalls lift fireworks out of crates, load them in rows of tubes behind a rope barrier with a sign that reads, **WARNING: HIGH EXPLOSIVES.**

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- BEHIND BLEACHERS

Niles tugs Kenya by the hair past the happy crowd as, KABOOM! explosions overhead make their faces glow.

NILES

Make a sound and I start killing
everything I see.

EMCEE (AMPLIFIED)

...and we all remember it was the
original thirteen colonies that gave us
our first taste of freedom!

A burst of THIRTEEN EXPLOSIONS causes Niles to glance this
way and that, as the crowd "oohs" and "aahs" the display.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- AT THE NUMBER FOUR

Pepper steps off the bus, tucks the .22 pistol into his
pants, scans the area and sees,

Curtis run hard, his head bobs up and down between the rows
of cars, he's chasing something.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- AT THE FOUNTAIN

Lydia waits, paces, watches FIREWORKS EXPLODE overhead, the
sirens are making her nervous.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- AT THE NUMBER FOUR

TWO LAPD SQUAD CARS, engines roaring, lights flashing, are
the first to arrive, as FIVE LAPD POLICE OFFICERS leap out,
crouch and approach the bus, and behind them,

A SWAT TEAM VAN screeches to a stop, SWAT SNIPERS pile out
the back, kneel and aim as spotlights hit the bus and,

At the back door, Art steps out, shaky, he is immediately
grabbed by an LAPD Officer, tossed to the ground where a
SWAT SNIPER almost shoves his rifle down Art's throat.

SWAT SNIPER

Freeze! Hands where I can see them!

ART

I'm a hostage...

LAPD OFFICER

Okay! It's a hostage, it's a hostage!

A third LAPD Officer yanks Art to his feet, away from the
bus, as a SWAT SNIPER noses his rifle through the door.

SWAT SNIPER (MEGAPHONE)

THE BUS IS SURROUNDED! TOSS OUT YOUR
WEAPONS!

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- BEHIND BLEACHERS

Niles tugs on Kenya's hair, she lets out a sharp cry as they keep moving past the happy crowd, fireworks boom above and voices blend into the dyslexic paranoia that is,

IN NILES' HEAD
WOW! KILLER! AMAZING! A BIG ONE!

NILES
Quiet! All of you!

Twenty yards back, Curtis watches, gets closer, grimaces from the pain of his dead arm, but keeps going.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- AT THE NUMBER FOUR

Officers crouch at all angles, aim their weapons as the Passengers, one by one, step out of the bus, get grabbed and tossed to other Officers.

RUBEN
Hey, take it easy! We're safe now,
right?

L'LL-2-MUCH
He's got her! Somebody, please, help my
friend!

Captain Hawkins steps from an arriving Squad Car, scans the area, keys his walkie-talkie with,

HAWKINS
I'm at the bus...

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- AT THE FOUNTAIN

A HUGE EXPLOSION BURSTS in the sky overhead as Niles and Kenya approach, Lydia stands next to the 4 X 4 Range Rover.

LYDIA
Niles, where's Mac...?

NILES
He couldn't make it. Let's get out of
here.

Niles studies Lydia, something is wrong here, he pulls Kenya close to him and his face scowls, what he sees,

Corrie steps out from behind Lydia, crouch with a .38
POLICE SPECIAL.

CORRIE
Drop your weapon and let her go!

Niles shoots BOOM! BOOM! Lydia ducks to the ground, and Corrie dives behind the Range Rover.

Running and wincing, Curtis freezes when he hears shots, sees Niles and Kenya, he's in the open, an easy target.

Niles walks backwards with his arm around Kenya, he turns, sees Curtis, raises his Grizzly WynMag and BOOM! BOOM!

Curtis dodges out of the way, screams in pain from the broken arm as bullets hit all around him.

KENYA
Curtis! HELP!

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- BEHIND BLEACHERS

Pepper walks deliberately, bumps into passing people, he's searching for something.

In the bleachers above, the gunshots easily mix with the aerial display as the Crowd points and gawks and yells.

EMCEE (AMPLIFIED)
...and who can forget the things that
count here in America, our personal
freedoms.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- STAGING AREA -- FOONK!

A MISSILE rockets aloft and explosions paint the area with color as a FIREMAN loads a tube, when silently a RED SPLOTCH appears on his chest, he falls over dead as,

Niles yanks Kenya under the rope barrier, past the WARNING: HIGH EXPLOSIVES sign, through the rows of tubes where other Firemen work, and toward an empty field bordered by trees, it's the edge of the park.

Curtis comes up to the dead fireman, scans the area, sees in the distance,

EXT EMPTY FIELD -- NIGHT -- NILES AND KENYA

stumble along as a loud KABOOM! explodes overhead, Niles turns, desperate, BOOM! BOOM! he shoots wildly into space. Kenya screams in fear, the voices are everywhere.

IN NILES' HEAD
AMERICA! WONDERFUL! FREEDOM! FORGET!

CURTIS
Let her go, man....!

Curtis staggers up, racked by pain, out of breath, as Niles turns, snarls, aims and CLICK!

EMCEE (AMPLIFIED)

...and now, ladies and gentlemen, the grand finale!

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- IN THE BLEACHERS

The Crowd is on its feet, salutes, points, looks skyward in amazement, while below the extravaganza,

EXT EMPTY FIELD -- NIGHT -- NILES

shoves Kenya away, turns and runs, but is tackled by Curtis, who growls through the pain, pounds on Niles' head with his good arm, but he's no match for,

Niles who grabs Curtis broken arm, twists hard, Curtis moans in agony, crumples to the ground, suddenly Niles is on his back, his arm around Curtis' neck in a vicious stranglehold while above them,

A HUGE CLUSTER OF FIREWORKS explode in colorful splendor, the ending to end all endings, and then everything stops, it's over, only smoke hangs in the night air, while below,

Curtis chokes, as Kenya beats on Niles, who likes the kill, it's what he lives for.

EMCEE (AMPLIFIED)

...well, ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the fireworks portion of our show this evening, thank you for attending and please drive carefully.

NILES

The show's over, man...

Curtis is dying, Niles knows it, but suddenly POW! a bullet hits Niles in the shoulder, he lets go of Curtis and POW! another bullet hits him in the chest, he flies backwards, now it's very quiet as,

Pepper runs up, the .22 pistol in his hand, Kenya weeps and leans down to help Curtis who gasps for precious air.

Pepper steps up to Niles, heaves a sigh, bends down close for a better look when,

CLOSE ON NILES FACE, his eyes pop open, he easily snatches the gun out of Pepper's hand, rises to his feet, aims the weapon right between Pepper's eyes with,

NILES

You stupid, old man! You deserve to die!

Pepper stands there, helpless, the last thing he expected.

CLOSE ON THE TRIGGER as Niles begins to squeeze off the deadly round when,

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! Niles is driven backwards by the force of three bullet hits, he can't believe this is happening. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! three more bullets hit him again, spin him around, and when he turns, his hands are at his side, in a gesture of complete surrender. BOOM! BOOM! the final two shots blow him off his feet.

Corrie rises from a crouch as the smoke clears, her .38 Police Special now empty of bullets, she runs to her father, stops a few feet away, they stare at each other.

PEPPER

OFFICER MARTIN, am I glad to see you!

Now they grab hold of each other, it's a moment they will both remember for the rest of their long lives.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- AN LAPD SQUAD CAR

pulls to a stop nearby, the door opens and Jenny Martin gets out, she scans the area with a very worried look, sees Corrie and runs to her.

At an AMBULANCE Keith and Ruben are being treated by PARAMEDICS.

KEITH

If you would just lighten up a little, you might start getting some fun out of life. You know, you're smart, you could be doing a lot, hey, you want a job?

RUBEN

I'll take a job on one condition, if you come to dinner with my family, and they like you.

KEITH

Deal.

Keith offers Ruben his hand, they shake on it.

RUBEN

I was thinkin', you know, you got all this cash, right? And I know some people who make things with their hands that are so unique, like a lost art, you know, from the original people...

And nearby, Art and Sadie hold each others' hands.

SADIE

Art...?

ART

What is it, Sadie?

SADIE

I'd like to meet your son, would you introduce us? He's a war hero, right?

Art smiles big, these two people have found each other.

INT THE NUMBER FOUR -- NIGHT -- PEPPER

stands in the wrecked hulk, walks up to the smoldering dashboard and fishes through ashes, comes up with,

The CERAMIC BUS, it's hot and Pepper has to toss it from hand to hand, but **WORLD'S GREATEST DAD** is still there.

EXT KENNETH HAHN PARK -- NIGHT -- OUT OF SERVICE

changes to THE NUMBER FOUR as Pepper emerges, tucks in his shirt, puts on his hat and jacket, walks to the front of his bus, polishes some beat chrome with his sleeve, hits a headlight which flickers on, kicks some dirt on flames that flicker around flat tires, looks up and sees,

Corrie and Jenny standing there, watching him, a look of understanding on their faces.

PEPPER

I drive this bus, I'm a bus driver, I drive the Number Four.

A CROWD OF REPORTERS are circled around Curtis, his arm in a sling, and Kenya who strokes his head.

CURTIS

I'm just ordinary people, right? And this is my ordinary girlfriend, right? Hey, it's no big deal, we just did a few ordinary things...

Curtis sees something and turns to Kenya with,

CURTIS

Excuse me, a sec, baby.

At the Number Four, Curtis walks up next to Pepper, who stares at the wrecked bus.

PEPPER

The Merrymaker got hurt real bad, she's all banged up...

Curtis realizes what this man needs.

CURTIS

Pepper, did I ever tell you about the time I was in the Navy? Assigned to an atomic-powered submarine? And we had to go up against this Russian sub under the polar ice caps, it was like BEEP-BEEP-BEEP all night long, strong men breakin' down and cryin' from fear, BEEP-BEEP-BEEP all night long, and there I was, at the sonar, trackin' Boris and Igor.

Pepper looks up at Curtis, frustration and anger on his face, but when he sees the big smile, he realizes Curtis is trying to cheer him up and smiles big too.

PEPPER

Curtis, shut the fuck up!

CURTIS

Hey, thanks for the suspenders, man

FREEZE FRAME.

